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A Third Person.

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Author of "PROPER PRIDE," "DIANA BARRINGTON," "TWO MASTERS,"
"INTERFERENCE," "A FAMILY LIKENESS," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. GREY, OF JHANSI.

THERE was a piercing arrow in that innocent speech of Rose Yaldwin's: "Be as angry as you please with him on your own account."

No need to recommend this course to Mrs. Skyler. She was sufficiently furious with her evasive relative. All her pretty wiles, her smiles, tears, confidences and flatteries had been wasted, and nothing remained to her but an humbling sense of failure and an enormous dressmaker's bill. She had been fighting against fate, for all along she had been haunted by a conviction that, although by clever stratagems (and lies) she had secured the actual bodily presence of her cousin, nevertheless his heart and his thoughts had been entirely with that odious girl next door. Oh! if ever circumstances afforded her a chance of making Rose Yaldwin uncomfortable, the will would not be lacking.

Annie sought an early opportunity of communicating Roger's message. She was naturally abrupt, and the extraordinary nature of her errand made her shy.

It was a simple task to tell her friend that "Roger had been greatly disappointed at her absence—that he had not enjoyed himself one bit." All this came glibly enough, but matter-of-fact, practical Annie found immense difficulty in blurting out with a broad grin:

"He said he hoped that you would not forget him."

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With all the good-will in the world, Miss Baggot knew that the message had been ill delivered, and that, on the whole, messages of that description, despatched through the medium of another woman, were a mistake.

She was afraid to say too much for fear of committing Roger irretrievably, consequently she erred in the opposite direction and said too little. Roger's eager words and impassioned expression, in the dimly-lit ante-room, were but poorly translated by Annie's hard-featured countenance and blunt speech at the prosaic hour of ten o'clock in the morning, and she left the impression on Rose's mind, that, for once in her life, Annie had attempted to perpetrate a joke, and that an ill-timed one.

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"Mother," said Miss Baggot, entering the drawing-room one afternoon in her walking things and speaking with unusual excitement, "I have something most extraordinary to tell you."

"It is not often that *you* tell me anything out of the common," returned Mrs. Baggot, laying down her book, "so let me hear what it is at once—meat is down a halfpenny, eh?"

"No," with an indignant gesture; "but Rose and I have just been into town together, and—what do you think? She has been cut dead by people twice!"

"Cut dead!" repeated Mrs. Baggot.

"Yes; at Attwood's, the fishmonger. (By the way, salmon is *still* two shillings a pound.) She was just going up to speak to Susan Prior when she turned her back on her in the rudest way. We could not make it out. And coming along the Mall we met Mrs. Gordon, who always stops and has a talk, as you know—and how hard it is to get away from her!—instead of which, she passed by with a nod to me, looking straight over Rose's head."

"You are sure you did not imagine all this?"

"Mother, how ridiculous you are! How often have you told me that I had no more imagination than an oyster?"

"Yes, that is true. I wonder what it means? Perhaps Clara can throw some light on the subject when she comes in."

"Most likely," returned her sister; and she muttered to herself as she left the room: "It would never surprise *me* if Clara was at the bottom of the whole thing."

Five o'clock found Mrs. Skyler at home, standing in front of the fire slowly removing her gloves, and evidently in a state of uncommon good-humour. It was not often that she returned to the bosom of her family in such a pleasant condition.

"Well," she said, "I've been having tea with Mrs. Grey in Warwick Road, and I'm just in in time ; it has begun to pour—we shall have a wet night."

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. Baggot indifferently as she heard wild gusts of rain lashing the window-panes. The weather was no concern of *hers*. She had her snug, lamp-lit room, and no need to leave her warm fireside.

"I've heard a nice story about Rose Yaldwin," continued Mrs. Skyler, as she made her gloves into a ball and tossed them into an arm-chair. "We cannot have her coming to the house in future."

"Why not, pray?" asked her mother in her sharpest key.

"On account of Annie," returned Clara deliberately.

"On account of *Annie*? You must be raving."

"Wait till you hear," continued Mrs. Skyler with an air of haughty displeasure—raving indeed! "Rose Yaldwin is a most dreadful girl. Mrs. Grey's maid is engaged to a policeman——" Here Mrs. Baggot broke out into an irritating laugh. "And this policeman told her as a great secret, that last September he saw Miss Yaldwin walking on the parade between one and two o'clock in the morning, with a young man."

"How did he know it was Miss Yaldwin?" inquired Mrs. Baggot feebly. Of course it had all come out. She had predicted it to Roger, but for once the fulfilment of her own prophecy caused her intense discomfiture.

"By the dog, Jacky—he was with her. Boag, that's the policeman, could not be positive as to the identity of the man—he was a gentleman, and young—but he could swear to the lady; and *now* what do you say?" concluded Clara triumphantly, warming one be-ringed hand at the fire, and stretching the other open-palmed to her mother, as if demanding some immediate contribution.

"I say that I know all about it," was the astounding answer. "Yes," sitting up very erect; "I have been in the secret all along—a perfectly harmless secret. The man was Roger."

"Roger?" repeated Mrs. Skyler, recoiling a pace.

"You know the general's temper and the life he leads his household," proceeded Mrs. Baggot, now dropping into a tone of easy narrative. "Well, last September he and Rose had a fearful falling out, and she was on the eve of running away—nay, in the act of running away—one night, when Roger met her on the Mall by chance, and talked, and reasoned, and coaxed, and got her to go back—I saw them come in myself—and Roger came straight up here and told me all about it." This was not a strictly correct version of the story, as we know.

"I don't think that your amended edition makes it so much better," said Clara, with her most superior air. "She was out between midnight and one or two o'clock; she was walking with a young man. You must allow me to have my own ideas; I am not easily hoodwinked."

"Then am I to understand that you don't believe your cousin Roger, or Rose, or me?" demanded Mrs. Baggot excitedly.

"The question is," coolly evading the other query, "what complexion the general will put upon the tale when it comes to his ears? I don't mind betting you five pounds, that he will turn Rose out of his house."

"I don't bet on serious matters," rejoined Mrs. Baggot stiffly. "If he turns her out of his house, I shall receive her into mine."

"In which case I shall take my departure," retorted Mrs. Skyler with an air of lofty virtue.

"Very well, Clara, you may," was the totally unexpected reply; "and once you go you shall not return."

Was this her mother who was daring to speak to her in this way? thought Clara, as she opened her long light eyes in angry amazement. Her mother, whom she bullied, flattered, deceived and cajoled? This pale, resolute old lady seemed a complete stranger.

"How many people have heard the story?" she demanded; "since *when* has it been going round the town?"

"Only since last night, and I don't think more than a dozen people know."

"And give a lie half-an-hour's start, and who can catch it? It may be in London by this time. However, if the worst happens, Rose shall have a home here, and of course Roger—who was *always* in love with her—will come home at once and marry her."

This was not the scheme of punishment which Clara had

mentally meted out to her rival ; she was absolutely playing into her hands at the present moment ; and she stood watching her mother, who was in a completely unprecedented frame of mind, go hastily out of the room. No, no, it would not suit her to leave her luxurious quarters, even if Rose Yaldwin was adopted into her family.

She had a comfortable home, free board and lodging, under her mother's roof ; her mother was liberal enough, she paid for her washing, stamps, entertainments, and allowed her to order flies at her own discretion. These little items were not valued at the moment, but supposing she had to provide for all these things herself ? her four hundred a year would not go far. No, no, she would not move off, and give her share of a warm nest, to that detestable girl, who seemed to bewitch all her relations. Meanwhile she heard hasty footsteps overhead in her mother's room, callings, bangings of doors, and some one quickly descending the stairs ; she went into the hall, and was confronted by her mother in her oldest bonnet and a waterproof. Mrs. Baggot was certainly very cross. She hated getting wet, as if she were a cat. She never went abroad a foot in bad weather, or weather unsuited to French boots and silk stockings, and here she was about to sally forth in the teeth of a dark February evening and amid torrents of rain.

"Where are you going ?" inquired Clara tragically.

"Out," was the stern laconic reply.

"But where, this awful night ?"

"I'm going to your friend, Mrs. Grey. I must stop this story at once ; there is not a moment to lose."

"And you've never called on Mrs. Grey, and it's pouring cats and dogs ; there's not a fly to be had, and it's three-quarters of a mile to Warwick Road," cried Clara, launching objection after objection.

"Yes ; all the same I'm going," seizing an umbrella and opening the door.

"You could not do more, if it was one of us," remonstrated Clara.

"If it was *you* I would not do as much. I shall probably get my death ; you are old and well able to look after yourself, but Rose is a mere child, with few friends, and I promised Roger."

And so saying, she jerked up her dress, and began to descend

the steps with daintily shod feet, and then tripped down the wet walk with the cautious gait of one who was painfully conscious of thin stockings, and Louis Quatorze heels.

"So you promised Roger, did you?" repeated Clara, standing in the open doorway, and gazing mechanically after her departing parent. "I wish I had known all this before—it would have saved me an immense outlay of time, worry and money."

* * * * *

With the rain beating in her face, and the wind trying to wrest the umbrella from her, Mrs. Baggot struggled bravely on regardless of muddy roads, puddles and the weather, for her mind was intensely preoccupied with respect to her approaching interview.

"It's going to be a duel *à la mort*," she said, "and one or other of us will practically fall."

As she came to this fierce conclusion, she stopped before a small brilliantly lit up house in a terrace.

There was a light in the hall, in the room next the hall, in all the windows upstairs, and as she entered, a sound of loud laughing was audible. She removed her cloak, gave her name distinctly to the servant, and followed her quickly up to the drawing-room. As the maid threw open the door and announced, "Mrs. Baggot," there was an instantaneous silence.

Mrs. Baggot had never called before, and now she arrived alone at half past six, and on a pouring wet evening—but she never did things like other people.

It was a pretty little room, with snug chairs, Persian rugs, shaded lamps, and photographs; indeed, at first, it seemed all lamp shades and photographs.

Mrs. Grey was a pretty little woman (really little), with prominent blue eyes, brilliant white teeth and light brown hair. She said she was twenty-nine—but her dear bosom friends generally added another decade. She had come to reside in Morpington two years previously, and gradually insinuated herself into society. She dressed well, gave pleasant luncheons and charming afternoon teas—especially on Sundays. She numbered more men than women among her acquaintances, but had a certain number of ardent intimates of her own sex, which number included Mrs. Skyler. Mr. Grey, an undefined individual, was somewhere abroad; there was an immense photograph of him on an easel,

and to this, his wife gaily introduced her visitors, saying "it was the next best thing to presenting them to the original." To the question, "When will he be home? when do you expect him?" her answers were copious, but vague. Mrs. Grey, though she made great fun of Mrs. Baggot, was secretly annoyed that that eccentric lady had never deigned to call upon her (nor had the Yaldwins), and she was, with all her vagaries, one of the upper ten and in the most exclusive set in Morptingham. Here she was at last, looking decidedly forbidding, and sternly rejecting all offers of tea. She did not attempt to join in the general talk. No, after she had given her opinion of the weather, she simply sat in silence, and then it suddenly dawned upon her hostess, that she had come with a purpose, and was determined to sit the others out.

After a short time these gay guests—a very young man with an eye-glass and a loud laugh, and two middle-aged ladies with smart bonnets and "revived" hair—took their departure; and as soon as the door had closed upon them, Mrs. Baggot at once found her voice.

"Mrs. Grey," she began, "you are no doubt surprised to see *me* here on such a day, and at such an hour. Nothing but a most urgent matter would have brought me out. I have come to speak to you privately about Miss Yaldwin."

"Yes?" assented the other with an impertinent elevation of her arched eyebrows. She now saw her way to paying out Mrs. Baby Baggot for being stuck-up, and not having called upon her, and she drawled in her company voice:

"But, perhaps, the less we say of that girl the *better*?"

"I quite agree with you—as soon as this story is silenced," rejoined her visitor with emphasis.

"Silenced?" echoed Mrs. Grey with an interrogative smile, that was absolutely maddening.

"I suppose Clara has given me the true account?" proceeded Mrs. Baggot, and she recapitulated it word for word.

"Yes, that is the true unvarnished tale."

"And when did you hear it?"

"Only last night."

"Do many know?"

"Only about a dozen. I just dropped a hint to the Priors, and Gordons, and Smithes—people with *daughters*."

"I understand. Well," now suddenly rising to her feet; "I come to tell you, that I know all about it. Rose was running away from home, and my nephew happily met her, and brought her back. Rose is a good girl——"

"I'm afraid you will find it difficult to get other people to agree with you," responded Mrs. Grey with a placid smile.

"They will agree with me if *you* will help me, Mrs. Grey, and put an end to the scandal at once."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Baggot!" in a tone of mock-humility, "you value my powers absurdly. I could no more stop it now, than turn the Thames. If I had known her personally, or even known *you*"—with an insolent look—"I might have taken some interest in the matter; but you can scarcely expect me to endeavour to work a miracle, for a hot-headed and, to say the least of it, sly and imprudent young person, who is a total stranger."

"Do you know—have you any idea of what may be the result of your discovery?" demanded Mrs. Baggot with a catch in her breath.

"Well," with a little shrug, "I should not wonder if her grandfather, who, from all I can hear, is an outrageous old bear, were to bundle her out of the house—out of Morpingtonham."

"And you won't raise a finger to prevent it?"

"My dear lady, why should I, even if I could?"

"I will tell you why—you can and shall," said Mrs. Baggot, who was extremely pale, and whose voice had a ring of repressed passion. "Unless this story is stopped at once," and she shook her gloved finger impressively, "*you* will have to leave Morpingtonham. I give you"—and she glanced at the clock—"just twenty-four hours."

"Now, really, Mrs. Baggot," protested her hostess, with a patronizing laugh, "I always heard that you were eccentric—but I never supposed——"

"You never supposed that I knew that you were the notorious Mrs. Grey, of Jhansi?" interrupted her visitor.

Mrs. Grey's face became ashy grey; her great bold eyes looked into Mrs. Baggot's with an expression of horror.

"What do you mean?" she stammered in a faint voice.

"Just precisely what I say, and *you* would herd an innocent girl out of society. Oh, what a place this world is, to be sure! I have always known who you were, from the very day you

arrived, and up to the present I have never told a soul. I did not call on you, as you can easily understand, but I held my tongue, for I thought you probably wanted to make a fresh start in life, and as far as I was concerned, you should have your chance. And to think of your being the first to cast a stone!" and she glanced upwards, as if she was astonished to behold the ceiling in its place.

"You are talking the most insane nonsense. How dare you identify me with—with that creature?" cried Mrs. Grey hoarsely.

"I am, as you know, speaking the simple truth. I saw you when you first went out to India fifteen years ago. You were pointed out to me at Allahabad. You were a very pretty woman *then*, and I have a good memory for faces. Grey is a common name, but yours is an uncommon countenance, and I can prove what I say a hundred times over."

"I defy you to prove anything against me, you libellous old scandal-monger," screamed Mrs. Grey hysterically. "Give me one proof."

Mrs. Baggot glanced at the door—it was half open—and then she bent forward and whispered into her hostess's ear.

Mrs. Grey drew back and gasped. Her face became suddenly livid. She looked fifty years of age. Then she broke down completely, and began to sob, hard dry sobs, as she leant her forehead against the mantelpiece and groaned out:

"And it has followed me here."

"Yes, it has; and you confess that you are 'that creature,' as you call yourself?"

"And what can I do—for—Miss Yaldwin?"

"Whatever you please. You are now acting solely in your *own* interests; but if by to-morrow this scandal about her is not ground down and stamped out to the very last spark, by the next morning the other story—your story—will be known from end to end of Morpingham. I have only to whisper it to Chatty Stratton and to old Mrs. Skinder, and it will go far and wide. Remember that I implored your forbearance in the first instance—and in vain. You had no more mercy than a crocodile. I only fell back on your own past, as a last resource. It is the sole weapon with which I can defend Rose Yaldwin—and I shall use my power remorselessly."

"What am I to do? What do you suggest?" inquired her listener sullenly.

"I am sure you need not apply to *me*. I have always understood that you are marvellously fertile in resources. You might ask your friends to tea, or write, or call. As long as you assure them, that there is not a breath against Miss Yaldwin, the means of the communication are immaterial; and if the fact is not known, marked and inwardly digested, by to-morrow night, you will be the sufferer, and under any circumstances I shall tell Clara. She can keep a secret, and I think it right that she should know who you are."

"You are a hard woman, Mrs. Baggot."

"By no means. On the contrary, I am generally considered deplorably *soft*. And I have not been hard to you. Have I not guarded your story most religiously? Do you think any of your dear bosom friends would have done as much?"

"You are right. You have been generous to me, and I—yes, from first to last, I have behaved like a beast! Yes, I will do my best to carry out your wishes; in fact, I will carry them out without fail," she added, with sudden resolution, "and I will speak to Price and the policeman."

"As to the policeman, you may send him to me, if you please. I will tell him the whole truth, and I am sure he will believe me and hold his tongue; and the sooner you have a word with your maid the better. Good night," said Mrs. Baggot, not attempting to shake hands. "I rely upon your promise. Remember, if you break it, that I shall keep mine."

The old lady then hurried briskly downstairs, and took her waterproof, and her departure.

"Well, mother?" said Clara, opening the door and eagerly relieving her of her wet umbrella. "What ages you have been! What have you arranged with Mrs. Grey? You did not get much satisfaction from her, I am certain. Did you?"

"I got all that I required," replied Mrs. Baggot, as she divested herself of her dripping cloak in the hall. "That story will be crushed out by her to-morrow. By to-morrow night, it will be as if it had never been uttered."

"How on earth did you manage it?"

"By the magic of a name. Clara, will you promise to keep what I say to yourself?"

"Yes, of course."

"On your word of honour?"

"On my word of honour. And what was the magic name?" she inquired eagerly.

"You have heard of Mrs. Grey, of Jhansi?"

"I should rather think I *had*," with emphatic scorn. "But why?"

"Because Mrs. Grey, late of Jhansi, is the lady you had tea with this evening."

"What!" almost shrieked Mrs. Skyler, staggering against the hat-stand. "The woman who was forbidden Government House—the woman who——"

"Hus-s-s-sh," interrupted her mother. "As Annie would say, *Remember the servants*. However, thank goodness, I have settled the other affair, and it certainly seems rather astonishing that the woman who was going to turn an orphan girl out of her home—the woman whose sense of propriety has been so shockingly outraged—should prove to be none other than that too notorious person. You think that I know queer people, my dear, and pick up some undesirable acquaintances; but you see, after all, I am more exclusive than you imagined. I never made a friend of Mrs. Grey, of Jhansi."

CHAPTER XXIV.

VARIOUS SPECULATIONS.

THE immediate result of Mrs. Baggot's embassy, was a violent cold in the head. Rose came in to inquire for the invalid two days after her expedition, and found her, nursing herself over the fire, in somewhat low spirits, and armed with a carbolic smoke ball.

"So I hear you went out in all the wet, the night before last," said Rose, who conversed with Mrs. Baggot in terms of easy affection. "I don't wonder you are laid up."

"Pray, how do you know I was out?" sniffed Mrs. Baggot.

"Leach saw you coming in," was the ready reply.

"Leach sees too much," and she indulged in a prodigious sneeze.

"But, dear Mrs. Baggot, what *could* have possessed you to venture out in such weather? Why did you not send Annie, or even Wickes?"

"It was a matter of business, my love. I was obliged to see to it myself, as it was rather important. Now sit down and tell me all your news."

"I have not much, as usual," seating herself. "Grandpapa went up to town by the early train, to see some rare Cashmere stamps, and to attend a meeting of his special stamp 'ring.' I have had quite a pressing invitation to go to tea at the Priors' to-morrow afternoon. The other morning, in town, Mrs. Prior turned her back upon me, and now she writes and signs herself, 'yours ever affectionately;' and the same day Mrs. Prior cut me, Mrs. Gordon passed me by with a queer sort of half bow between Annie and me. Yet, to-day, she came all the way across the road, to speak to me, and kept me for ten minutes. Now I wonder what it all means? What do you think, Mrs. Baggot?"

Mrs. Baggot coughed, and merely shook her head. Silence was golden in the present instance. And Rose little dreamt that there was any connection between Mrs. Baggot's cold and Mrs. Prior's pressing invitation.

Miss Yaldwin was not the only person who was lost in astonishment at this particular period.

Many of her own sex, marvelled deeply at the sudden coolness between Mrs. Grey and Mrs. Skyler.

They had been so intimate, and now Mrs. Grey's doors were never darkened by her friend's graceful shadow. They bowed when they met, but that was all, and unkind cynics laughed and made disagreeable remarks about "women's friendships." Mrs. Grey was certainly not as conspicuously *en évidence* as formerly. She had retired into her shell. She had joined the local clothing club, and mothers' meetings—and all the world wondered.

Annie Baggot also found food for speculation at this time. Accustomed as she was, to her unmanageable and youthful parent's wild follies and misdemeanours, she wondered much, oh, *very* much, to find one day, on opening the boudoir door, that parent closeted with a policeman! Boag had been summoned and duly appeared, reeking of new cloth and blacklead. At first he fully expected to be set upon the track of some sly domestic thief. Not at all. Mrs. Baggot wished to speak to him privately, respecting a very serious family matter, and she spoke

for ten minutes, to some purpose. She told him a true tale, concluding her narrative with these words :

"You see, Boag, what trust I am putting in your honour. Now, at this moment, you know a good deal more of General Yaldwin's affairs than he does himself. You know him, and you know what the result will be if this unfortunate escapade ever comes to his ears. I am relying confidently on your assistance to hush the matter up ; it was no crime."

"No, ma'am, it was but natural ; and if I may say so, I'm only surprised the young lady did not break out years ago. He is a terrible old gent. No one could blame any one, for making a bolt of it from him, he has eyes all over his head, and takes everything on himself. What do you think he says to me one day ? 'I say, constable, your boots aren't properly blacked.' Now, what was that to him ?" demanded Boag, with just indignation.

Boag knew Mrs. Baggot well. She was known to him as one of the most charitable ladies in the town. His own relations had several reasons to bless her kind offices, and he was aware of the many secret errands of mercy, on which her prim elderly maid was despatched. He respected Mrs. Baggot sincerely, and was deeply honoured by her confidence. She had spoken to him just as if he was a gentleman—and he intended to live up to the part.

Yes, Wickes, the prim maid, to whom Clara strongly objected, because she was slow, because she did not wear smart dresses, and because her hands were cold, was greatly indebted to her mistress. She adored her, and revered her, from the top hair of her chestnut *toupée* to the heel of her small bronze shoe. She could (if she had dared) unfold a tale of her munificent charities—a tale that would have afforded a ready answer to Mrs. Skyler's unsolved problem :

"I wonder what my mother has done with all her money ? She does not spend half her income. I wonder how much she will leave ?"

(To be continued.)

The British Sovereign Ladies of the Brunswick Dynasty.

No. III.—CHARLOTTE OF MECKLENBURG, CONSORT OF GEORGE III.

HARSHLY as she was judged by a certain section of her contemporaries ; bitterly as she was often reviled by the enemies of kingcraft and monarchy—the lapse of time has not rendered it necessary either to rehabilitate or to whitewash the character of Charlotte, consort of George the Third. Indeed, it would scarcely be correct to say that her contemporaries generally condemned her at all, and as the events of the stirring era through which she lived have receded into historical perspective, her figure and her attitude towards a nation of which, at times, it might have been truly predicated, “ No king can govern and no god can please,” have steadily won sympathy and respect. Knowing what we now know of the court and times of George the Third ; realizing how difficult it must have been to bear with a lunatic husband on the one hand and with an undutiful son on the other, we can measure at its true worth much of the abuse, misrepresentation and malice of which Queen Charlotte was the recipient for more than a quarter of a century.

The town of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, which constitutes the capital of the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, is not a very large one at the present day. One hundred and sixty years ago it was smaller even than it is now. The principal object of interest, as the writer of a guide book would say, is a fine ducal castle of considerable antiquity. It was within the walls of this castle that in the month of May, 1744, the eyes of the third British queen of the Brunswick dynasty opened to the light.

Charlotte of Mecklenburg was the youngest daughter of Charles Lewis, brother of the third Duke of Mecklenburg, who died in 1751. Her mother, the Princess Albertine Elizabeth, was a good pious woman, which, when the profligate character of many of the courts of Europe in her time is taken into consideration, is saying a great deal. Before this amiable princess had

seen many summers the disastrous Seven Years' War plunged her country into the direst misery. Grief for the hardships under which her subjects were groaning sent her to an untimely grave in 1740. ?

Were it not for the fact that so many appear incapable of believing that royal children are like all other children, it might seem superfluous for us to say that the childhood of Charlotte resembled the childhood of most little damsels who have the good fortune to be born, as the phrase goes, with a silver spoon in their mouths. Her education was not neglected. Competent instructors were provided to train her up in the way she should go, and all hurtful influences were as far as possible excluded. The important office of governess to the young princess was committed to Madame de Grabow, a lady of noble birth and great attainments, whose lyrical compositions earned for her not unjustly the title of "the German Sappho;" and the talents and sound scholarship of Genzner, an eminent divine of the Lutheran Church, were pressed into the service for natural history and philosophy. Under the instructions of these two able preceptors the Princess Charlotte made a very respectable progress along the pathway of knowledge; and it may be easily conjectured:

"How happily the days
Of Thalaba went by."

But she was soon to leave this little land of Goshen for the great wilderness of the world. Her days flowed on tranquilly until the year 1762, when there came a fluttering of the Mecklenburg-Strelitz dovescotes.

While Caroline had been growing steadily up from infancy to maidenhood, George William Frederick, eldest son of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, and Augusta, daughter of Frederick, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, had ascended the throne of England in 1760. He bore the title of George the Third, and was destined to sway the rod of empire for a period of sixty years, a longer term than that of any previous British sovereign. At the date of his succession King George had barely attained his twenty-second year. His father, Frederick, Prince of Wales, had died in 1751, and, like that other famous hero, nothing in his life became him like the leaving it. While the loyal bards of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were acting after their

kind by bewailing, in sonorous pentameters, the loss of this estimable potentate, whose chief pastime was debauchery, the wicked, but more truthful, world said to itself, as a naughty satirist did :

“ Here lies Fred,
Who was alive and is dead ;
Had it been his father,
I had much rather ;
Had it been his brother,
Still better than another ;
Had it been his sister,
No one would have missed her ;
Had it been the whole generation,
Still better for the nation.
But since 'tis only Fred,
Who was alive and is dead,
There's no more to be said.”

The foregoing lines are certainly not remarkable for the graces of poetic composition, but we have no hesitation in affirming that they are immeasurably superior to some which the deceased prince was in the habit of inditing, and of which a peer, whose critical opinion of them was asked, sarcastically replied, “ Sir, they are worthy of your Royal Highness ! ”

Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his consort, as our readers will not be surprised to learn, never troubled their heads much about the education of their children. Dunces they were, and dunces they remained. The consequence was that when some of them arrived at years of discretion, they were signalized to a remarkable extent by indiscretion. How much, for example, he who in later days became George the Third had profited by the instructions of such governors, governesses, tutors and teachers of accomplishments as had danced attendance upon him, may be inferred from the fact that at the age of eleven he was unable correctly to read his mother tongue. From boyhood to early manhood he was treated as if the highest qualification for a king in perspective were what it seemingly is for legislators and social reformers—ignorance. The only real teacher that the boy ever had was the celebrated comedian, James Quin, who trained the royal children in the principles of elocution and superintended the stage arrangements at the private theatricals which were sometimes held at Leicester House.

George the Third had hardly ascended the British throne before he began to look out for a help-meet for him. His Majesty had at first hoped to induce Lady Sarah Lennox to share the crown with him, but her ladyship was not to be coaxed into any such arrangement. Colonel David Graham was then commissioned to visit the various courts of Europe in search of a suitable wife. Nor did he fail to find one. The "canny Scot" bent his steps to Strelitz. At Strelitz he saw the Princess Caroline. Carefully he noted all there was to note. In due course, George, King of England, received a dispatch containing the eulogy of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Intoxicated with what he read, which was ratified by what he was told by certain confidential friends who spoke from personal knowledge, George demanded of Lewis Frederick, Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the hand of his daughter in marriage.* Need we say that this favour was conceded with exceeding great joy?

It must be borne clearly in mind that not a whisper of these negotiations had as yet been breathed beyond the charmed circle of the court. Nor was it until the month of July, 1761, that George the Third graciously favoured his minister, Lord Bute with his matrimonial intentions. Lord Bute was not slow in acquainting his friends, who in their turn acquainted their sisters their cousins and their aunts, and then, as generally happens in such cases :

"The flying rumours gathered as they rolled ;
Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told,
And all who told it added something new,
And all who heard it made enlargement too."

Few, however, had the faintest knowledge of her who was to be their queen, and probably Horace Walpole never wrote truer words than when he said, "There are not six men in England who knew that such a princess existed." †

After much palaver the marriage ceremony was definitely fixed for the 8th of September, 1761. Under the safe conduct of three English duchesses, Ancaster, Hamilton and Effingham, the young princess left her quiet and happy home at Mecklenburg-Strelitz for Cuxhaven, a German seaport situated at the mouth

* Jesse's "Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III.," i., 88.

† "Letters," ed. Cunningham.

of the Elbe. At Cuxhaven the party embarked for old England's shores, and after a tempestuous passage across the German Ocean, the royal yacht anchored safely in the haven of Harwich. According to the interesting excerpts from the Stuart manuscripts, which were first printed by Jesse, the eminent historian, the future queen experienced nothing of the pains of *mal de mer*. While her attendants were prostrated with the qualms of that bugbear of nervous voyagers in that age as in this, Charlotte, we are assured, remained "undaunted ; consoled them, prayed, sang Luther's hymns, and when the tempest a little subsided, played 'God save the King' on her guitar."

It was early in the afternoon of the 8th September, 1761, that Charlotte gazed for the first time in her life on London scenes and London people. Through the pleasant village of Islington, past Sadler's and Bagnigge Wells, along the New Road (now the Euston), at that time bounded on either side by rich green fields, where the cows grazed at leisure and the young lambs skipped with their dams, where boys delighted to fly their kites and trundle their hoops, where artists delighted to commit to canvas the aspect of the distant northern heights, long since obscured from view by miles of intervening streets and houses, the royal *cortège* took its way. Hyde Park was entered from the Oxford Road, now Oxford Street, hardly a stone's-throw from Tyburn gibbet, and thence they drove down Constitution Hill to St. James's Palace. All along the route the jubilant populace came out in droves to greet their future queen. Their loyalty, their patriotism, their characteristic good humour were strikingly displayed. As she went on her way the young princess created a most favourable impression, and it was well for her that she did, for she was to sojourn among the English people for more than half a century. Horace Walpole was an interested spectator of Charlotte's arrival in the metropolis, and his next letter to his friend, the Earl of Strafford, was, therefore, full of what he had seen. "The noise," wrote he, "of coaches, chaises, horsemen, mob, that have been to see her pass through the parks, is so prodigious that I cannot distinguish the guns. I am going to be dressed, and before even shall be launched in the crowd. Pray for me."* St. James's Palace was reached shortly

* "Letters," ii., 431.

after three o'clock. The young princess was met at the gates by the Duke of York, who conducted her to the garden, where for the first time she met the gaze of her future spouse. Gallantly embracing her, the king led her into the palace, where she was introduced in turn to the members of the Royal Family. Thence she was conducted to her apartment, in order to undergo the trying ordeal known as "dressing for dinner," one of the miseries of human life from which even crowned heads can procure no exemption.

Dinner concluded shortly before nine o'clock in the evening, and the king and his bride, accompanied by their guests, adjourned to the royal chapel, where the marriage ceremony was solemnized. The service was read by the Primate, Dr. Thomas Secker, and the bride was given away by the Duke of Cumberland. The sight was, of course, far too interesting for Walpole to miss. He was in the thick of it, and his next correspondent was furnished with a full, perfect and sufficient account of it. "The queen," he wrote, "was in white and silver. An endless mantle of violet-coloured velvet lined with ermine, and attempted to be fastened on her shoulder by a bunch of huge pearls, dragged itself and almost the rest of her clothes half-way down her waist. On her head was a beautiful little tiara of diamonds, worth three-score thousand pounds, which she is to wear at the coronation." Charlotte's train was borne by ten peeresses, and it may be interesting to some of our readers to learn that among these ten peeresses, Lady Elizabeth Russell was extremely handsome, Lady Elizabeth Keppel was very pretty, and that the star of the evening was the stately Lady Sarah Lennox, who had had the courage to decline the king's gracious offer of his hand and heart.

More space than we could possibly afford would alone suffice, were we disposed adequately to relate the grand doings which elapsed between Charlotte's marriage and the coronation. For some days she and her spouse were deluged with congratulatory addresses (which, in nine cases out of ten, we fear, were as hollow as they were congratulatory) from every quarter of the realm. Among the number was one from the married ladies of St. Albans. This missive so tickled some of the merry wags of the town that they indited a similar composition, purporting to be a petition of the old maids, in which the queen was solemnly

assured that it was only from a lack of discernment on the part of the sterner sex, and not from any fault on their own part, which compelled them to remain unmated.

The abbey church of Westminster had in the previous ages of its existence witnessed many magnificent spectacles, but they were all outvied by that which attended the coronation of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and George the Third of England, on the 22nd of September, 1761. Walpole declared that "it was all delightful," and if so fastidious a judge as he said so we may be perfectly sure that it was. Dean Stanley asserts that it was on this memorable occasion that the English representatives of the Dukes of Aquitaine and Normandy appeared for the last time, and that with them perished all British sway over the French.* The superstitious were much concerned at the fall, during the ceremony, of the largest pearl from the crown, and naturally enough, at a later date, when the United States of America forced the king into an unwilling acknowledgment of their political independence, this mishap was brought to remembrance by the poet :

"When Pitt resigned, a nation's tears will own,
Then fell the brightest jewel of the crown."

The inevitable sermon was preached by Archbishop Drummond, and the nuptial bonds were forged by Dr. Secker. Some of our readers may call to mind a noteworthy incident of this coronation, which is noted by the Wizard of the North, in that vivid description of the ceremony which he has introduced into his romance of "Red Gauntlet." Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, of all the king's rivals perhaps the most formidable, watched the proceedings, incognito, from one of the galleries of the abbey. "Bonny Prince Charlie" was then lurking in London under the assumed name of Brown, and was detected in Westminster Abbey by one of his secret adherents, of whom indeed there were then not a few to be found in the metropolis.† Outwardly these people were loyalists, but inwardly they were traitors, and

* "Historical Memorials of Westminster," p. 88.

† Further proof of the truth of this remark may be seen in the "Gentleman's Magazine," 1764, p. 24, and Nicholls' "Literary Anecdotes," ix., p. 401.

doubtless were in the habit of singing to themselves like the Popish recusant :

“The illustrious house of Hanover,
And Protestant succession,
To these I have allegiance sworn,
While they can keep possession.”

Notwithstanding the vast concourse of spectators that was present, the coronation ceremony was signalized by no disasters. It is related that several of the ladies who appeared in the processions had their heads dressed the preceding evening, and reposed all night in arm-chairs in order to prevent any disarrangement of their locks. It is also related that the public curiosity to view the spectacle was so great, that people who had more money than they knew what to do with readily paid ten guineas for good positions, which were, in most cases, secured long before dawn on the morning of the ceremony.* Many thousands were turned away from the abbey doors, but as the spectacular mania, like the *cacoethes scribendi*, was one which must be humoured at any cost, it was reproduced at the playhouses. So greatly was this puppet-show relished that for many years it was tagged on at the theatres whenever the historical plays of Shakespeare were represented at them. Among the interested sightseers at the coronation was worthy Thomas Gray, the author of the immortal “Elegy in a Country Churchyard,” who had quitted his Cambridge hermitage to revel among the literary treasures of the library of the British Museum and to rummage the bookstalls of Moorfields and Little Britain. Gray contrived to secure the Lord Chamberlain’s box in Westminster Hall, and as he resembled the spare Cassius in being a great observer who looked quite through the deeds of men, he saw all that there was to see. Writing to his friend, the Reverend James Brown, on the 24th of September, 1761, the poet gave his correspondent a word-picture of the ceremony. “The instant the queen’s canopy entered,” he wrote, “fire was given to all the lustres at once by trains of prepared flax that reached from one to the other. To me it seemed an interval of not half a minute before the whole was in a blaze of splendour. It is true that for that half minute it rained

* Williams’s “Brief Memoir,” 1819 ; Bonnell Thornton’s “Chapters,” cited by Oulton in his “Memoirs.”

fire upon the heads of all the spectators (the flax falling in large flakes), and the ladies, queen and all, were in no small terror, but no mischief ensued. It was out as soon as it fell, and the most magnificent spectacle I ever beheld remained. The king (bowing to the lords as he passed), with his crown on his head and the sceptre and orb in his hands, took his place with great majesty and grace. So did the queen with her crown, sceptre and rod. Then supper was served in gold plate. The Earl Talbot, Duke of Bedford and Earl Effingham, in their robes, all three on horseback, prancing and curveting like the hobby horses in the Rehearsal, ushered in the courses to the foot of the *haut pas*. Between the courses the Champion performed his part with applause. The Earl of Denbigh carved for the king, the Earl of Holderness for the queen. They both ate like farmers. At the board's end on the right supped the Dukes of York and Cumberland; on the left, Lady Augusta, all of them very rich in jewels. The maple cups, the wafers, the falcons &c., were brought up and presented in form, three persons were knighted, and before ten the king and queen retired."* In addition to the academical anchorite to whom we are indebted for this glimpse of court pageantry, there were others who recorded their impressions of the scene, and we may adduce the testimony of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, who was also present at the ceremony. "The ladies," she wrote, "made a glorious appearance. Wherever there was any beauty of countenance, or shape, or air, they were all heightened by the dress. Lady Talbot was a fine figure."† Devotion to the study of classical literature had clearly not diminished Mrs. Montagu's partiality for the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.

Dismissing now the subject of bridals and coronations to all for whom they possess any interest, let us revert to Queen Charlotte, who, there is much reason to believe, saw the vanity of it all and would have been ready to exclaim with the poet:

"Insulting chance ne'er called with louder voice
On swelling mortals to be proud no more."

Upon the public mind she had made a favourable impres-

* Gray's "Correspondence," ed. Gosse, iii., pp. 114-115.

† "Letters," iv., 364.

sion. The popular verdict was reflected in the familiar Virgilian line:

"Namque haud tibi vultus
Mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat. O dea certe!"

For a young woman of only eighteen summers, Charlotte had indeed a difficult task before her. Her enemies, if she had any, were few in number. Radicals had not yet learned to lay their profane hands upon the sanctity of our "glorious Constitution in Church and State." Whigs, however jealously they affected to regard encroachments on the liberty of the subject, had not yet the courage of their opinions. Tories, it need hardly be said, were brimming over with loyalty. In these circumstances the king experienced no difficulty in obtaining from a complaisant House of Commons an annual provision of one hundred thousand pounds; as many persons would say, a mere trifle. The palaces which her predecessors had occupied were placed at the disposal of the new queen, and Richmond Park and Somerset House were added to the number of them. As the king had taken a fancy to Buckingham House, this commodious residence was purchased for a trifling twenty thousand pounds, and subsequently presented to Charlotte.

Joy bells pealed loud and long in London on August 12th, 1762. And it was natural that they should, for the walls of Buckingham Palace were echoing and re-echoing to the wailings of an heir to the throne. Profuse and diverse were the congratulations which poured in upon the royal parents, but their joy was destined soon to be turned into sorrow, and they, in common with all mankind since the days of Adam and Eve, were to experience the melancholy truth:

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child."

We can well believe that it must have needed all the forbearance of Charlotte and her spouse to bear with George, Prince of Wales, during his passage from youth to man's estate, so numerous were his sins, his negligences and his ignorances. From 1762 to 1777 scarcely a year elapsed without a son or a daughter being added to the royal family. In the end Charlotte became the mother of fifteen children, of whom the last three,

Octavius, Alfred and Amelia, preceded their mother to the grave.

During the twenty years which followed her accession to the throne, the queen steadily increased in favour with her subjects. Her kindness was great. Her charity was unbounded, although not exactly of the type which complacently contents itself with sending a solitary five-pound note to the Society for the Encouragement of Mendicity among the Poor, on the distinct understanding that it is acknowledged the very next day in the columns of the *Times*. Moreover, Charlotte's charities were usually dispensed with other people's money, and in such circumstances it is not difficult to be generous. The easy and graceful manner in which the queen presided over the festivities of the court and the drawing-room won high encomiums in an age when *gaucherie* had not yet become what we fear it now is, a somewhat honourable distinction. Her fondness for dancing, for birthday splendour and for court display, naturally gladdened the hearts of the London tradesmen. Her demeanour towards her inferiors was invariably gracious and condescending. Her command of the English language was all but perfect, and we have not the least doubt that her Majesty was fully equal to the task of inditing essays similar to those of Dr. Johnson's "Rambles" and "Idlers," which in those days were the criteria of English prose composition. Above all, Charlotte's accents were always kind, and what the grief-stricken Lear with great felicity says of the injured Cordelia may fittingly be applied to her:

" Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low; an excellent thing in woman."

Lord Chesterfield, that most polished, most accomplished courtier of his age, saw much of Charlotte in private life, and, in writing to his son in 1763, he said, "You do not know the character of the queen. Here it is. She is a good woman, a good wife, a tender mother, and an unmeddling queen."* These words were written by Chesterfield in 1763. They would have been equally applicable in 1783. It is deserving of mention that Charlotte endowed an asylum for decayed gentlewomen in Bedfordshire and that she became a patroness of the Magdalen Hospital. The latter step was the more creditable to her, inasmuch as her

* "Letters," ed. Lord Stanhope, iv., 400.

predecessors had always held studiously aloof from the patronage of such an institution in any shape or form. Like all great folk, Charlotte had to take her share of quizzing. But then it must be remembered that she really had what so many of her Phari-saical sisters only pretended to have, a heart full of the milk of human kindness. It is true that she united a taste for ostentation with a taste for economy and a simplicity in her mode of living which the cavillers were not slow in twisting into absolute parsimony. But their cavils are not worth serious refutation. The queen's kindness to that genial old soul, Mrs. Delany, widow of Dr. Patrick Delany, was very great, and would of itself be sufficient to rebut the charge of parsimony. In Mrs. Delany's voluminous correspondence, edited by Lady Llanover, there are constant references to the favours which she received at the queen's hands during her residence at Windsor in 1785. "It is impossible for me," wrote Mrs. Delany on one occasion, "to do justice to her great condescension and tenderness, which were almost equal to what I had lost."

Meanwhile the queen's eldest son had reached man's estate. As we have already intimated, his Royal Highness was anything but one of those good young men that we sometimes read about in books. A sad dog he had ever been, and a sad dog it was absolutely certain he ever would be. We are quite willing to admit what some of his eulogists claim for him, that his manners were captivating, that his sense of humour was keen, that his readiness to make a promise was as great as his readiness to break one. So far so good. But we must not allow our recognition of all this to blind our eyes to his perfidy, his duplicity, his meanness, his crass follies, and his misspent life. Governors, pastors and masters, clerical and lay, could do nothing with this wayward stripling. At twenty-one years of age his Royal Highness found more charms in the vicinity of stables and dog-kennels, and in the conversation of grooms, ostlers and footmen, than he did in the society of worthy men and the conversation of virtuous women. The result was that when the prince entered into possession of Carlton House, which a grateful nation furnished for his use, in Pall Mall, he initiated a reign of revelry and debauchery which ended only at the expiration of a third of a century. The sole aim of his existence was amusement, and, like the young man who inspired the

muse of Longfellow, he refused to be told, in mournful numbers, life is but an empty dream.

Sorely as Queen Charlotte's equanimity was tried by the vagaries of her eldest son, it was to be even more sorely tried by those of her husband. In the spring of 1789 George the Third became unmistakably insane. Not content with wondering how apples got into dumplings and smoke out of the chimney, his Majesty walked into the royal gardens and amused himself by plucking up the flowers by their roots to see whether they were growing:

"With anxious eye
And head awry

peeping like a magpie into a marrow-bone." In these circumstances far-seeing politicians began to shake their heads, and to talk with bated breath, for the first time for many years, of a Regency. But William Pitt was then in power, and it soon became apparent that William Pitt was decidedly averse from the proposal. The wily premier knew the character of "the first gentleman in Europe" far too well to regard with favourable eyes the prospect of being called upon to play second fiddle to his Royal Highness. Pitt's opponents, however, took a different view of the subject, and tried to convert the queen to their views. She, poor woman, occupied a most embarrassing position. From the day that she ascended the throne she had made a point of refraining, and in our judgment most wisely, from any attempts at directing the affairs of the nation. For maintaining this attitude the nation had respected her. It was considered, and not without reason, that a politician in petticoats, like a poor relation, is one of the most irrelevant things in nature, and that the attitude of all ladies, and especially of sovereign ladies, towards affairs of state should be that of the needy knife-grinder of the "Anti-Jacobin:"

"For my own part
I never love to meddle with politics, sir."

Upon this principle, as we have said, Caroline had, hitherto, invariably acted. Nor is posterity likely to blame her for her conduct. But now, when she saw her unfortunate husband prostrated with that fell malady which makes havoc of the brightest, most transcendent intellects, what was she to do? Which way was she to turn for the best? To whose counsels

was it safe to lend a willing ear? Where might she expect to find anything better than machinations, hollowness, treachery? What wonder if she was induced to put her trust and confidence in Pitt and Dr. Willis, the physician, whom Pitt had summoned to attend his royal master. The friends of the king and of Pitt's administration naturally clung to every word of hope which escaped the lips of Willis, who was loudly decried by the friends of the Prince of Wales. Sir Sydney Smith, in a letter to Lord Auckland, spoke of "the opposition physicians" as being so clamorous in endeavouring to shake confidence in Willis that the public had become "strangely divided in doubts, hopes and fears." And party spirit, leaving the precincts of the court, soon affected the entire nation. Scandal became busy with the characters both of the queen and of Pitt. "You will see in the opposition papers," wrote William Grenville to Lord Buckingham, "that they are beginning to abuse the queen in the most open and scandalous manner."* A bill for conferring the powers of regent upon the Prince of Wales, and empowering him to dissolve the administration, had been introduced into the House of Commons, and on the 12th of February, 1789, reached its final stage. The day upon which it was to undergo the third reading in the Upper Chamber drew nigh. Hilarious were the spirits of all members of the opposition at the bright prospect before them. Places, pensions, all those good things which are the rewards of genuine and disinterested patriotism, and the glory of them, came into view like some beatific vision. Dulness and tergiversation were kissing each other. Expectation was approaching its climax when the king's lunacy began to subside. He got better and better, and on the 10th of March the court physicians made their *congé*. The knavish tricks of the opposition were confounded. That night London was the scene of an illumination which was absolutely unprecedented within the memory of its oldest inhabitant. From the northern heights of Highgate and Hampstead to the remotest boundary of the Surrey hills one unclouded blaze of living light met the view. Dr. Moore, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, gazed with wonder on the impressive scene from the windows of the ancient halls of Lambeth Palace.†

* "Buckingham Papers," ii., p. 68.

† "Auckland Correspondence," ii., 301.

"London," wrote Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, years afterwards, "displayed light from one extremity to the other; the illuminations extending without any metaphor from Hampstead and Highgate to Clapham, and even as far as Tooting, while the vast distance between Greenwich and Kensington presented the same dazzling appearance. The poorest mechanics contributed their proportion, and instances were exhibited of cobblers' stalls decorated with one or two farthing candles." * On the 23rd of the following month the king and all the Royal Family attended a general thanksgiving service beneath the dome of the metropolitan cathedral. Business was entirely suspended. Flags and banners waved in all directions. The city was delirious with joy. A magnificent choir of five thousand voices accompanied the organ as it thundered the majestic strains of the Hallelujah chorus beneath the stately dome of St. Paul's. No wonder the poor old monarch wept, and, turning to Dr. Tomline, the Bishop of Lincoln, who stood by, said, "I now feel that I have been ill."†

Not long after the king had become insane, Europe was thrown into a panic by that awful event which is known as the French Revolution, when, as Coleridge has well expressed it:

"France in her wrath her giant limbs upreared
And with that oath which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free."

At last the inexorable hour had struck. At last the match had been applied to the train of the gunpowder. At last the evil magicians of the times had done their work. This was their hour and the hour of darkness. Robespierre and his infamous associates appeared on the scene. The throne was precipitated and the flames of anarchy were kindled on its site. Twice in twelve months did one of the fairest of European cities witness the sickening spectacle of a regicide, and its streets running red with the blood of the slain. Such an unparalleled series of events was watched with profound interest in all countries by men of deep and passionate feelings. Nowhere was their progress watched more closely than in England. To the majority of people the Revolution seemed an angry fiend, whose advent had

* "Memoirs," iii., pp. 369-70.

† Tomline, "Life of Pitt," 3rd ed., ii., 488.

been predicted by the exile of Patmos and a long succession of apostles and prophets of the church ; while to not a few great and good men it seemed to be the uprooter of evil and the harbinger of good things to come. Wordsworth, on the tip-toe of expectation, expressed in verse the feelings of this courageous band :

“ Oh, pleasant exercise of hope and joy !
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love !
Bliss was in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven ! Oh times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance !
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name.”*

Both George the Third and Queen Charlotte were much concerned at the character of the Revolution, and from 1789 onwards regarded the throne as anything but secure. Thomas Paine, who was greatly influenced by the Revolution, published his “ Rights of Man,” in answer to Burke, in 1792, and the book being widely read in England, imbued many with the revolutionary doctrines. But despite this the English throne was secure, and so were its occupants. The ensuing years, however, were more eventful in the history of Europe than they were in the royal life which we are specially considering. Those years beheld the termination of the long and tedious trial of Warren Hastings ; the cruel executions of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, which signalized the triumph of Republicanism ; the rupture between Burke and Fox ; the outbreak of hostilities between England and France ; costly and needless expeditions, which were partially redeemed on the ocean by brilliant engagements like those of Howe and Jervis, and gallant actions like those of Nelson and Pellew ; the partition of Poland ; the demolition of old alliances ; all the thrones of the Continent shaken by the genius of revolutionary France. Europe had never seen ten such years of convulsion

* “ Poems of the Imagination.” The Revolution as it appeared to its enthusiasts at its commencement.

and dismay. England had never known ten such years of anxiety and distress. In the ashes of one revolution were living the germs of another. The expense, the heartburning and the rankling dissatisfaction of the Revolution were followed by a war more oppressive in its burdens and more unsatisfactory in its results. Marvellous achievements were performed from time to time by English admirals and English captains. The triumph of Nelson at Bastia was succeeded by that of Sydney Smith at Toulon, and that again by others which equally maintained the honour of England's bulwarks. Never were the debates of the legislative assembly more fiery. Never were questions of greater constitutional or diplomatic moment more eagerly contested. The eighteenth century closed amidst the throes of the Irish rebellion. The nineteenth century dawned on the union of Great Britain and Ireland. The king remained tolerably sane until the year 1811. In the month of October, however, his dejection was worse than it had ever been. A Regency now became an imperative necessity. A bill to that end was accordingly introduced into Parliament by the ministry of which Spencer Perceval was the head—Pitt, the statesman that was dearest to the royal heart, having died five years before. The Regency Bill constituted the Prince of Wales regent of the realm, under certain restrictive provisions, which were to cease at the end of a year. To Charlotte was committed the care of her husband, and the disposition of the royal household. The prince was empowered to grant peerages only for services that had been rendered to the army and navy. On the 5th of February, 1811, the Regency Bill was presented by the Lord Chancellor to the king, who, with a melancholy countenance, expressed his assent to its proposals.

Thus the Regency of George, Prince of Wales, was initiated, and who is there who is so ignorant as not to know how much is summed up in it? For more than nine years that Regency lasted, and it is not going too far to say that it is a period of our history which finds its parallel only in the reign of Charles the Second. Midnight banquets, from which the guests were carried away speechlessly drunk—gambling tables from which miners who had sat down in opulence rose up in indigence—balls and assemblies graced by the presence of notorious demi-reps and courtezans—such were the features of this epoch. Nor should it

be forgotten that it was during this reign that foppery reached its nadir. Beau Brummel, an impudent coxcomb, arrogated to himself the functions of arbiter of fashion, and constituted himself an oracle from which no appeal could lie. No sooner did he pronounce an opinion than that opinion became law, and woe betide the luckless wights who what time they heard the sound of the lute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music, refused to bow down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up.

In 1795, the Prince Regent, in order to extricate himself from debt, agreed to accept in marriage the hand of Caroline of Brunswick. Ten years previously he had been secretly wedded to the beautiful Mrs. Fitzherbert. But this secret had oozed out, as secrets will, and the public had never forgiven the insult to the national faith, for Mrs. Fitzherbert was a Papist. The Gordon riots, which in 1780 had nearly laid the town in ashes, had plainly demonstrated the temper of the popular mind in respect of Popery, and yet in the face of this the Regent had the assurance to force a Catholic lady, who was, it is only just to say, infinitely better than her creed, into marrying him. It redounds to the credit of Queen Charlotte that throughout life she treated Mrs. Fitzherbert as a daughter, and groaned in spirit at the disgusting way in which she was treated by the prince. It was mainly through the interest of Queen Charlotte and the Duke of York that this excellent lady received an annuity of six thousand pounds.

In April, 1795, the Regent formally married the hapless Princess Caroline of Brunswick, at the Chapel Royal in St. James's Palace. That the prince was averse from the marriage was well known, but the ceremony, notwithstanding, was performed. His Royal Highness' dejection was only too apparent, and had he not kept his spirits up by pouring spirits down there is no saying what might have happened. Long afterwards Caroline asserted that her husband was dead drunk the best part of the wedding night, which in all probability was the case. The birth of their only child occurred in the following year. This child was known as the Princess Charlotte, and instead of healing the differences which existed between her parents, only made matters worse. In May, 1796, all marital regard finally disappeared. Husband and wife now regarded one another with

mutual aversion. The queen, it was said, encouraged her eldest son in the part he played, and manifested her contempt too openly for her hapless daughter-in-law. To what extent these allegations can be said to be true, it is difficult to say. Probably the queen was induced to lend too willing an ear to the representations of some of Caroline's enemies, who, after the committee appointed for investigating her character in 1805, became exceedingly numerous. At last, goaded beyond endurance by the insults which were repeatedly heaped on her by the prince and by some of his disreputable lady friends, Caroline determined to seek peace and comfort on the Continent. Contrary to the strong representations of her best friends she left England in 1814, with the view of travelling in Italy and Greece, and Queen Charlotte never set eyes on her again. Possibly she concurred in the belief that in the circumstances it was extremely desirable that her daughter-in-law should be away from England, and from the charmed precincts of the court of England. Be that as it may, we do not hear that she ever expressed any interest in her welfare, or any wish that she should take up her abode with her husband and seek a reconciliation. Her only child, the Princess Charlotte, died in 1817, but even this sad event did not bring her grief-stricken mother to England. Nor did the death of Charlotte in the following year have any effect on her chequered fortunes.

In the interim it had been discovered that it was an utter improbability that the king would ever again be sane.* Yet most exemplary was the behaviour of Charlotte in these trying circumstances. All that was exacted of her, she performed. How distasteful her appearances in public must at times have been only she herself could say. Still, wherever duty called her, thither she went. So late as 1816, when seventy-three years of age, she attended Ascot races, with three of her daughters and her niece, the Princess Sophia of Gloucester. During the course of the following year Charlotte gratified the scholars of Eton College by attending their ancient Montem, and by giving a *fête* in her private gardens at Frogmore in their honour on the following day. In the month of April, 1818, she was present at the wedding of the daughter whom she loved so dearly, the Princess

* Twiss's "Life of Eldon," ii., 197.

Elizabeth, who gave her hand to the hereditary Prince of Hesse-Homburg. Rush, minister plenipotentiary from the United States, who witnessed this ceremony, says that the queen went the rounds of the company, speaking to all. "There was a kindliness in her manner," he says, "from which time had struck away useless forms. No one did she omit. Around her neck hung a miniature portrait of the king. He was absent, scathed by the hand of Heaven." Hardly had half a year elapsed from the celebration of these nuptials than the queen received the solemn summons which no one can disobey. Death, who knocks with equal foot at the door of the royal palace and the cottage of the hind, prostrated her. She had suffered much for some years past, but in November, 1818, it became apparent that the royal sufferer was fast breaking up. The 17th of November dawned. The queen having been placed in her easy-chair, her children gathered affectionately round her to receive the last pressure of their mother's hand. As she held the palm of her wayward son, the Prince Regent, one sweet smile stole over her countenance. In another instant the gentle spirit had fled, "to where beyond these voices there is peace."

Genuine sorrow affected the inhabitants of London, and, indeed, it would not be going too far to say, affected the whole empire, when, far and near, in solemn tones, from the belfries of the churches, it was proclaimed that the king was a widower. In the universal sorrow the queen's venial political offences were freely forgiven. Slander held its tongue. The press ceased its libels. Rival politicians forgot to quarrel.

On the 2nd of December, a dark, dreary, winter's day, half London went out to see the funeral ceremony. From Kew Palace, the coffin was borne to Windsor and interred by torchlight the same night in St. George's Chapel, with all the boast of heraldry and pomp of power. The king was absent. He did not know, nor was he to know, that his wife was dead. Yet a few more months and that same vault in Windsor's nave opened its ponderous jaws once more to receive all that was mortal of George, King of England, who after suffering more than the tongue could tell or the pen recite, the august sufferer had succumbed on the 29th of January, 1820, to partake of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

This is hardly the place for a detailed character of Charlotte

From what we have said, most of our readers will be able to deduce some estimate of her character for themselves. That she was not before her age is undeniable, but then nobody can be blamed for not being before their age. We live in an age when much nonsense is talked about queens and their duties to their subjects. Queens, after all, are only women, and are not exempt from the infirmities which are incidental to human nature. Tried even by the severest standard, Charlotte's character will bear the closest scrutiny. No amount of what has been called "dry light," no amount of searching into the archives of the past, will make Charlotte's character different from what it was. It is no disrespect to her memory to say that she never rose above mediocrity, and that she was quite a cipher in the political world. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that she had a very trying position to fill at a very critical period of the national history; that she succeeded in maintaining that position, where many others similarly situated would have come to grief, and that she had in a pre-eminent degree the satisfaction of having conscientiously striven to do her best, which, after all, is the highest success to which any queen can aspire.

WILLIAM CONNOR SYDNEY.

My "Bureau de Crime."

By EDITH STEWART DREWRY,

Author of "ON DANGEROUS GROUND," "ONLY AN ACTRESS," etc.

EUREKA! "I have found it." The way to make a lot of money, even in these hard times. It is an inspiration—my idea, I mean—nothing less, although I will frankly admit that, whilst the brilliant idea itself sprang into life *per saltum*, it has been led up to by a long and careful observation of human nature and its legion of problems. One or more of these it is which has evoked my Eureka.

A *Bureau de Crime*! One always puts these sort of things in French, you know; doesn't look quite so ugly as in English. One likes to be wicked, but not to be called names. Well, then, my place shall not be a "Criminal Agency"—oh dear, no!—but a *Bureau de Crime*, where an experienced novelist may always be consulted as to the plotting and entire arrangements of crime, contemplated by perpetrators of the better kind, "who so constantly court detection by the omission of some detail which a professional plottist would have arranged for satisfactorily."

N.B. That is from my prospectus, you understand.

Doubtless, two disagreeable factors to be reckoned with in my very original scheme will at once suggest themselves to any well-brought-up citizen, viz.: the law and the said novelist's conscience.

The first would have to be hoodwinked somehow; that is my very object. The second—well, it is nothing new for one to sit upon poor knocked-about conscience, is it? So we'll put these objections of yours out of court as weaknesses, and suppose the above concern to flourish—as do the wicked—like a green bay tree. By the bye, *that* would be a splendid name for me, and plain English too: "The Green Bay Tree Agency;" quite pretty, and rurally innocent (only rurals are not a whit more innocent than we urbans).

Now the especial problem on which I base the idea of my

G. B. T. Agency is this. I have always been struck by the extraordinary, nay, fatuously stupid errors almost always committed in their crimes by offenders *not* of the criminal class born and bred, and I have often thought—jesting apart—that many such better-class criminals would never have committed the very mistakes which, in many instances, have led to their detection, if they could have consulted some experienced plot-constructor. I fully grant the difference between theory and practice in the science of criminal warfare, as in everything else; between the cool-headed, disinterested plan of crime laid out by the strategist in the office, and its practical working out by the person interested, who is, of course, more or less swayed by whatever passion is the *raison d'être* of the crime, and therefore liable to be flurried or otherwise mentally disturbed, so that he loses perfect coolness.

I put the criminal classes proper out of court, because their whole position rests on a different basis. They are brutish, ignorant; they care for nothing beyond keeping outside police range. There is no attempt to wear a mask, or pose as respectable. They suffer no shame or disgrace amongst their "pals," in or out of prison; on the contrary, the boldest, most constant miscreant is so much the more a hero to his kind. He makes no ado over his burglaries or murders, whether the latter be committed to prevent capture, or occur in a drunken brawl, and, so long as he gets a good "swag" out of it all, he does not much mind the risk of punishment. Indeed, as to crimes less than murder, he reckons that he must pass so much of existence in the "stone-jug," but calculates that he is still the gainer.

Well, then, crime to the habitual criminal thus becomes, so to speak, a straightforward matter of course—his whole existence, and no nonsense or disguise about it; he is simply a bird of prey, his one god "Loot"; he has no other stake in the general polity, and therefore has nothing to lose, except, at times, in and out, his liberty, which it is either ignorance or a mere sentimental mistake to suppose he values very highly, *quâ* liberty, as the educated and higher nature value freedom. What the criminal hates most about prison life is being cut off from drink, high feeding, and other coarse indulgence.

But when people of the better classes, with education and a status in the world, having, therefore, a greater moral responsibility,

descend into the region of crime, of course they have everything to lose by discovery ; their one aim is to gain the mercenary or other advantage of their deed, and yet still retain their repute amongst their social equals. It is to these better-class criminals, to whom crime is, more or less, the exception, not the rule, that crime is so dangerous, and needs such very careful planning. And this brings me back to my bureau, please, which we will suppose to be in full swing, and you and I are talking over things.

My first and very strongest advice to every client is "DON'T," backing it up with weighty reasons. I am quite safe in doing this, because when a man's (or woman's) evil passions are thoroughly roused and bent on gratification, all advice to forbear is precisely like pulling hard on the tail of the proverbial pig of Drogheda : the harder you pull, the more obstinately it rushes forward.

A lawyer may as well—as he often does—tell a litigant he has not a leg to stand on, and had better keep out of court. That man will be certain to fight to his last farthing.

Well, then, I say straight out, especially if it be with regard to a crime of violence, "My dear fellow, *don't*. The game is never worth the candle in these dangerous days."

Of course my client stares, and asks what the devil I mean ? So do you, perhaps, as that advice in connection with my bureau sounds rather like a paradox.

Well, I will answer you—mind, from a strictly cold-blooded, business point of view. Ethics are beside the question at present, because it goes without saying that crime is decidedly an ugly job for the soul, whatever be the gain in this life.

And, on this ground of policy alone, then, I assert that in far the majority of cases, crime, in the non-criminal class, does not pay because of the danger that in these days surrounds every step, and makes discovery at least a hundred chances to one against safety.

Firstly, then, the said criminal has relatives, friends, acquaintances, all more or less aware of his ways and means and movements. The victim or victims of his nefarious deed, ditto. Ergo, it is sure to be somebody's interest to notice and inquire into any unusual departure from accustomed ways in either party, if only from idle curiosity. A friendless nobody has much more immunity than his betters.

Again, directly a man commits a crime (especially if it be murder) he has to face the fact that, should the least trifle arouse suspicion, his hand is against every man's and every man's hand is against him. The Press, the public, are, as much as the law authorities, on the *qui vive* to aid in his detection; their varied motives are quite immaterial. The dangerous fact remains grimly in the foreground, that his one mind has to match itself against and *outwit* a legion of minds, many of them equal to his own, all either bent on, or ready to aid, the outwitting of his; and they are in cold blood, remember. Looking at the position in this way I do not think that it is possible for one brain (as a rule) to be capable of foreseeing and guarding against every contingency, fencing round every possible point of danger—not in these days, when the forces arrayed against that one offender have such enormous resources at command, a very network of machinery, which the least false step on the criminal's part may put in motion with results fatal to his safety. Why, fifty years ago, in fact and fiction, as one reads, crime was easy—plain sailing to what it is now with modern sciences and appliances. Don't I know too well, as a novelist, the trouble and difficulty of arranging my people's crimes and escapes? And fact is ten times worse of course; because, for instance, if I am desperate, I can bring along a veritable cyclone or a snow-storm, and break down telegraph wires till my hero or my villain is out of the country. But here, in real life, in this bureau, I can't arrange that matter so comfortably for my assassin-client; those horrid wires stick in their places—or there is a telephone, and it's ten to one that when he steps jauntily from the train at Dover to cross to Calais, he walks straight into the arms of a smiling detective, who is coolly waiting for him. Or it may be at New York that this happens; the wire precedes you all the same, and Mr. Byrne's officers will take care of you till their English *confrère* arrives. Electricity and steam, then, are enemies to our crimes, in fact and fiction; photography is another difficulty; the entire extradition treaty system another, and one of the deadliest. I must say, it is really too bad and inconsiderate of international law-makers that now there is scarcely a corner of the globe where one can set a creature down in peace to snap his fingers at any "bobby" in creation. Then there is the whole phalanx of those dreadful newspapers, and advertisements in

them and out of them; and sometimes—if it can be done—a rough sketch of the suspected person is added. This last item among modern perils was the one which led to the detection of that most stupid of criminals—Lefroy, who murdered poor old Mr. Gold in the train, near Brighton, a few years ago. And this again brings me back to the premisses which led to the suggestion of my agency—the almost unaccountable stupidity, shortsightedness, and lack of common-sense shown in the records of crime by those who are otherwise no fools. It amounts to an absolute fatuity. Certainly it presents a problem in metaphysics which it is difficult to solve. It really seems as if the mind, directly it passes into the realm of crime, takes a curious twist or becomes purblind. I will give book for my remarks presently, and if cleverer heads than mine find my humble deductions all wrong (as may be perhaps), I cannot help it; you must simply take my offered remarks for what they may be worth.

Well, then, in my opinion, foremost in this curious state of mind is that passion for the Diary, the manifestation of which is rather the rule than the exception in the records of various trials—notably, I may add, in divorce cases, breaches of promise, and commercial or other fraud cases. It is simple madness ever to commit to black and white any record of, or allusion to, anything nefarious, which, if found, is fatal evidence. You cannot get out of it, or twist it, or out-lie it. It is like a recurring decimal—you can't get rid of your own entry; it comes back and back eternally, and pins you—self-incriminated. If your memory is so bad that you cannot remember an assignation, or what you have done, or intend doing, in the name of sense make up your mind, perforce, to live in safe respectability. Personally, I hold a diary of all one's thoughts, feelings, doings, &c., as a horror, and dangerous as a Palace of Truth itself, the world being what it is. I thoroughly endorse the Jesuit maxim, which I shall have put up in red letters in my bureau: "Write so that even if the letters should come into other hands they should not give offence."

Only a few words those, but they inclose volumes of common-sense and astute worldly wisdom that will bear a wide application.

I remember—in the early '80's, I think—a divorce case in which the parties were people of position. The wife was the respondent. She and the co-respondent strenuously denied guilt, fought hard, and yet with incredible folly she had actually

noted down in her diary every assignation with her paramour—date, place, name. Still more idiotically she had not destroyed this damnatory evidence directly she knew that suspicion was aroused. Of course, the diary was got hold of, and was mainly instrumental in convicting her. This is but one out of many instances in cases of various kinds. Another instance, still more incomprehensible, occurred recently in the case of a charge brought in the English courts against a man of position, for fraudulently appropriating trust money of some £20,000 value. Before a warrant was issued he went abroad secretly, but later, finding himself obliged to be in England, he returned, also secretly, but was, to his amazement, arrested on landing at Dover. Of course he was searched, and on him was found a diary, and in this book, each under its date, were entries, amongst others, which noted being at a certain hotel under a false name, with expressions of apprehension appended; another noting that on the boat a passenger had looked hard at him—"I hope he did not recognize me, but I fear he did," or words to that effect were added. Now, imagine any man presumably sane who, knowing himself to be under suspicion of a crime, in hourly dread of discovery and arrest, yet actually puts down in black and white such fatally compromising matter as this, and carries it about on his person, which, should he be arrested, he must know would immediately be searched. He did the very things which, according to the dictates of common-sense, he should have left undone. Is it that, in a certain strained state of mind and nerves, there is a morbid excitement which finds a curious and irresistible safety valve in thus expending itself on paper?

Akin to the above is another striking fact in the history of crime, viz., the way in which criminals so constantly keep in existence, sometimes deliberately, sometimes by neglecting to destroy, papers, documents, weapons, or other things which are fatally compromising. More than one forger, for instance, has been convicted mainly through the discovery of the sheets of paper on which he has practised the imitation of the forged handwriting. Or, where the illicit document was a will or deed, the real instrument has been found, when all common-sense and caution should have burned it. The fire—is my advice to my clients, and pulverize the ashes even then. In the famous Bidwell Bank of England forgery (about '74), the police found in

Austin Bidwell's lodgings, in St. James's Place, a blotting pad which had distinctly blotted most compromising writing. It is true that these really very clever criminals were at the last surprised through a small oversight, sufficiently curious in such cool-headed offenders, and I have little doubt that Austin intended to destroy every such evidence *before* the final absconding so neatly pre-arranged. But if Austin Bidwell had been in my bureau to be aided in his plans of safety, I should have said at once: "Don't keep for a minute a bit of blotting-paper that has once been used to blot a dangerous document. Burn it directly. Always burn blotting-paper so used, my worthy sir. And also carry in your memory the addresses of die-sinkers. Don't copy them down; don't cut them out of the directory [that is what the Bidwells did], unless you burn up your copy of it without delay."

These and one or two more apparently insignificant but really grave errors in detail of construction, proved to be among the most fatal flaws in a gigantic forgery, which, on the whole, stands nearly, if not quite, alone for the daring, the manifestation of business capability and patience in the working out, the admirable scientific construction and remarkable cleverness—up to a certain point—of the four men who formed the syndicate. The object was, at any rate, worth the risk from their platform, they being swindlers by trade, who had no credit or status to lose by failure.

But of all offenders, I do think those who most constantly fail in the ways I have mentioned—the offenders who certainly most need my professional aid—are the disciples of Cain. The records of murder are full of evidence that the assassin did, or left undone, precisely those things which he should have been most careful to do, or to avoid doing, as the case may be. Indeed, the well-laid plan and carefully guarded outposts are, in the great majority of cases, conspicuous by their absence, although murder is of all crimes that which most needs every possible safeguard, being the crime, of all others, most beset with perils from without and from within. From without, for reasons of which I have already spoken; from within, because it is, undoubtedly, calculated to upset the nerves and the normal conditions of the mind, and therefore to render the criminal unfit, in truth, to cope with the endless dangers surrounding him.

Take, for instance, the case I have alluded to by name—the Gold-Lefroy murder. It was too utterly stupid throughout to deserve anything but contempt. As a matter of fact, a railway carriage in England (in America, the open cars make any secret crime impossible) is the worst place for a murder—above all, a first-class compartment. The guard has an uncomfortably sharp knack of noticing the passengers during the journey; people look out of windows at the train rushing by and see into this coach or that; tickets are so easily traced, too, and pin you to time and place so objectionably. Then, a shabby, hangdog-looking fellow, such as Lefroy was, being in a first-class carriage was in itself noticeable, the more so as Mr. Gold was the only other passenger and was well known on the line. Then the struggle was seen for a moment from a cottage window, and at Preston (near Brighton) Lefroy was observed to leave the carriage, and it was noticed also that the old gentleman was no longer in the compartment. Even when, through the stupidity of the country official, the murderer got to his sister's house and thence escaped to London—having no money to enable him to get out of the country—neither of the two foolish people thought of destroying every photo of the man. The police naturally "went" for that at once, searching the house, and the photo of this rather peculiar-looking man mainly led to his capture, for the *Daily Telegraph* published from it a rough sketch, which Lefroy's landlady recognized, and in consequence gave information. He had not had the means to fly the country and was arrested. It never does, you see, to commit a murder without a good supply of money. I never advise it in my *Bureau de Crime*.

Another instance, yet worse, is that of the murder in Scotland of young Rose, by one Laurie, for here the latter literally flung away the advantages of time, place and circumstance. His deed was positively made to his hand to pass for an accident, and the "fool in his folly" took all the trouble in the world to prove it impossible for it to be anything but a murder of his committing. He got Mr. Rose to go for a walk over a mountain pass, on one side of which was a precipice. A man on another hill saw them near the fatal spot—and, by the way, I never advise high, open places for this sort of business; you never know from how great a distance you are seen. In a lonely spot Laurie pushed his vic-

tim over the precipice, and then descended it by a path to make sure of him and rob him. The fall was deep and steep enough to insure death. Laurie had only then, in the name of all sense, to go back to the inn, unconcernedly saying that Rose had gone on farther, they having parted, *pro tem.*, in the pass, and that Rose would be back presently; then quietly to steal the money in his friend's valise (no one knew what was in it), and when Rose failed to appear, evince natural friendly alarm. The body, when found, would tell no tales save of a fall over the precipice. However strong the moral suspicion or belief that the fall was not an accident, nothing could ever have convicted Laurie of murder. Of robbery he might have been convicted, but the law must have acquitted him on the capital charge. Instead of this, what did the fool do, in the hopes of hiding the body? He dragged it to some little distance, where the gorge opened near the beach, and built it over with boulders of rock, and, strangest of all, pulled off Rose's boots and left them unburied! Then he walked off to the inn, said Rose had gone on for a few days, and that night he (Laurie) went away, taking with him his friend's valise and the silver watch he had worn on his person. Conceive such folly throughout! It pales the very crime.

Of course, when poor Rose's friends missed him, the whole country side was searched, and after a week the body was found—a murder, unmistakably. A dead man could not bury himself. Laurie had got away, but even then, after three weeks, must needs hark back to the very neighbourhood of his crime, hiding about, till he was found and arrested and was finally convicted.

The "Wimbledon Murder"—the case of Dr. Lamson, who murdered his crippled young brother-in-law, is another instance in point of bad planning and worse execution. Primarily, it is nearly always an initial mistake to murder any person in whose death you are known to have an interest, whether that interest be pecuniary or be the result of jealousy, revenge, or any other motive. If there is the slightest reason to apprehend that the death was not "from natural causes," as the coroner's verdict puts it, suspicion very naturally directs itself to you, the gainer by that person's death. Some poisons can be used so as to produce the appearances of certain complaints, but even then, time, great care, and constant personal intercourse between victim and

poisoner are absolutely essential to success. The least error means suspicion, an inquest, *post mortem*, and probably detection of poison. In these days medical science knows too much, from the murderer's point of view, of course, and poison is, I consider, on the whole the most easily traced and most dangerous mode of killing. Lamson set about it, too, in a very stupid manner, although as a doctor he might account for the aconite being in his possession. But he actually sent the poor lad—his victim—poisoned chocolate drops, some of which the boy naturally bestowed on a chum, whose symptoms of sickness resembled those of the victim. Then, at the last, the murderer got impatient, desperate, and "hurried up" (a fatal error in crime), giving with his own hands, in some sugar, a dose so large and so ill calculated—as *he was in a hurry*—that it quickly produced in the boy violent symptoms of its presence. Result—failure of the scheme, arrest and hanging of the schemer.

In still further support of my remarks, I could mention many more cases, but space does not allow me. Perhaps I have already trespassed too far thereon. I think, however, that I have in some measure well supported the substance of my dicta: that, since crimes will go on as long as the world wags, my *Bureau de Crime* ought to be a grand success; that (my business interest apart) the very best advice I can give my would-be clients is emphatically: "Crime is too dangerous ever to be worth while; once for all—DON'T."

Into Temptation.

By A. PERRIN.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BALL.

"— comes the moment to decide,
In the strife with Truth and falsehood,
For the good and evil side."—*Lowell.*

So Andrew departed into camp alone with a very bad grace, after arranging to encamp near the railway station the day we returned from Patwa, so that I should not have to drive into Kuttahpore and out again, to meet him.

I established myself with the Herrings, Sir Gerald and his belongings having arrived the day before.

Chatty was pleasant, companionable and good-tempered, and did her utmost to make me happy and comfortable. She would bring my tea to me in the mornings herself, and then get into my bed to "have a gabble," as she expressed it, and never seemed so happy as when I allowed her to wait on me hand and foot.

Mrs. Herring, with much complaisance, would watch Chatty and Sir Gerald, with myself as a chaperone, go off for long strolls or drives together, quite convinced in her own mind that it now only rested with Chatty to bring Sir Gerald to her feet.

But the young lady was not of the same opinion, although she kept her ideas on the subject to herself when in her mother's presence.

"What's the good," she asked me in private, "of telling me I wouldn't have him if he *did* propose? I know he isn't going to, and, of course, if he doesn't, I can't help it, and ma can't be cross with me. But it would disappoint her awfully if I said I'd refuse him. Poor 'ole mar! She'll get over it, and then she must take to Vincent."

"Then you really wouldn't have Sir Gerald, even if he *asked* you?" I inquired.

"Oh, don't imagine it's sour grapes," said Chatty laughing. "I wouldn't have him if he was a duke. I hate the sight of him, with his button-holes, and his shiny boots, and his fallals. He always looks as if he'd just come out of a bandbox."

"Indeed he doesn't," I could not help exclaiming.

Chatty roared with laughter.

"Oh, I knew I'd draw you," she said. "I tell you what, ma'am, it's a precious pity my lord doesn't go away."

"Chatty! You're most impertinent! How dare you say such things to me?"

"Oh, what did I say?" she inquired innocently.

I was rather disconcerted by this question, but maintained a dignified silence instead of answering.

Chatty's arms were round my neck in a moment.

"Don't be angry, old thing," she coaxed. "I was only teasing, and I promise I won't do it never no more. Sir Gerald's a beauty, and I'll accept him to-morrow if you like. Shall I?"

"You're a little goose," I replied. "Stop talking nonsense and help me with my gown for the ball."

I had decided to wear my white dress as I had nothing better, and with Chatty's help I altered the body, which was rather large for me, and twisted and turned the lace to a prettier way of falling, and made the most I could of it.

"How I wish I had a lovely white brocade," I said to Gerald the evening before the ball.

Dr. and Mrs. Herring had gone to see Mrs. Costello, who had eaten too much at the dinner-party and was still ill, and Chatty had disappeared into the house, leaving Gerald and myself wandering about the garden.

"I wish I could give it to you, dearest," he said regretfully; "if you were my wife, Josephine, *how* I would dress you. You always look nice in what you have, but you ought to be dressed in the richest things; you are so queenly, you would carry them off to perfection."

The words, "if you were my wife," brought the tears to my eyes. Oh, if only I were.

"Do you know," he went on, "sometimes I try to imagine what we would have done if we had met before—you know what I mean?"

I nodded my head.

"I would have taken you to Paris and to Vienna, and every place where life's worth living. I should like to set every city in Europe raving over your beauty. Don't you *know* how gloriously handsome you are?"

"Oh, don't laugh at me, Gerald," I said piteously. "I know perfectly well that I'm a great awkward lump, and that my hands and feet are huge, and that my best friend couldn't call me pretty."

I was perfectly sincere in what I said, and nothing was further from my thoughts than the idea of fishing for compliments.

"Of course, no one in his senses would call you *pretty*. It's much too feeble a term. Why, a woman with a face and figure like yours might do anything she liked in the world; you'd be the rage in London. And to think how you've thrown it all away. By God! It makes me sick to think of your being tied to that old brute."

"Oh, Gerald, I can't let you say such things; remember he is my husband."

"*Don't* I remember it every minute and second of my existence? Josephine, what on earth made you marry him?"

"Oh, I can't explain it all," I said wearily; "I only know that I did it."

"Tell me you wish you were free for *my* sake, my darling. I know you feel it, so why shouldn't you tell me? I do so long to hear you say it."

"I can't. It would be like saying I wished him to die."

"Very well, dear; I understand. Just think; we shall have the whole of to-morrow evening to ourselves at the ball, longer than we've ever had yet. I wish the old woman hadn't taken it into her head that I want to marry Chatty; she never gives us any peace."

"You certainly wouldn't have been asked here if she *hadn't* got it into her head," I said.

"Well, then, the Lord makes me truly thankful she has," said Gerald; and presently we were called in by Chatty, to criticize her in her ball dress, which she had put on with all its additions in the way of gloves, fan and lace handkerchief, and was marching up and down the drawing-room admiring herself in a long mirror.

She looked nice, though rather coarse and loud, and would

have looked much better if she could have been persuaded to wear either black or white, but she was inexorable on the subject, and stuck valiantly to her pink silk, in spite of my assuring her that every girl wore white at her first ball.

"What do you know about it?" she asked good-humouredly; "you've never even been to a ball yourself, so I'm not going to listen to *you*; my pink silk is lovely, and I mean to wear it. I firmly believe you're afraid I shall look nicer than you, now aren't you?"

And Chatty emphasized her words by pulling my hair and making diabolical faces at me.

We left Kuttahpore the next morning in a barouche, which had been hired from a native for the occasion, and reached the railway station in time to catch the three o'clock train, arriving at Putwa shortly before seven in the evening.

We went straight to an hotel, where we found Mr. and Mrs. Argles and Mr. Cassell, who had come in the day before.

"Well, this is wonderful," said Mrs. Argles, accompanying Chatty and myself to the room she and I were to share. "How *did* you manage to come?"

"By train," I answered laughingly.

"It's going to be a splendid ball," she went on, "and the decorations are too lovely; I saw them this afternoon. Oh, *how* I shall enjoy myself. How delicious to live again after being dead and buried for a year."

Mrs. Argles waltzed off down the passage to her own room, and Chatty and I were soon deep in the mysteries of our toilet.

We had a long, narrow whitewashed apartment, with two beds occupying the middle, and only one looking-glass, which Chatty and I peered into over one another's shoulders by the light of a kerosine oil lamp hanging on the wall.

Chatty was in a state of wild excitement; she was continually losing something, and beseeching me to help her find it or she could not go to the ball at all; she almost cried when she burnt a piece of her hair off in the process of curling her fringe, and was quite angry with me because mine curled naturally, though I took the trouble to explain that I could not help it. She was not nearly ready when it was almost time to start, and made herself hot and breathless in her efforts to dress quickly; so that

when we stood together at the last moment in front of the looking-glass, I gazed at myself calm and cool without a hair out of place, while Chatty bobbed and ducked under my arms and over my shoulders, a heated mass of millinery and flurry.

At this moment, Mrs. Herring rustled in gorgeous in her best purple silk, smartened up by bows of yellow velvet, which looked as if they had dropped on to her by mistake, and overcome with admiration for her daughter's appearance.

"Darling child, you look lovely," she exclaimed fondly. "That pink is most becoming to her complexion, is it not, Mrs. Boscawen? You look nice yourself, my dear; but Chatty's colouring, with her dress and all that, makes you look rather like a ghost. However, I daresay there will be plenty of other people in white to keep you company; it's the most common colour in a ball-room."

Brimful of satisfaction and maternal pride, Mrs. Herring led the way to the hotel drawing-room, where we found Gerald waiting for us, and the Argles and Mr. Cassell, who were also ready to start.

Mrs. Argles was looking her best, and I was consumed with a desire to know if Gerald had been asking her for dances before I came in, for she was attentively examining her programme.

"There," grumbled Mr. Cassell, "I've split my glove, and it's the only pair I've got. What an unlucky devil I always am."

"Let's see," said Mrs. Argles consolingly; "there's time for me to mend it. Bob, go and get my little work-case, it's somewhere in our room."

Mr. Cassell's discontented expression gave way to one of beaming gratitude, and I have no doubt that the glove honoured by being mended by Mrs. Argles' pretty white fingers, found its place among the unhappy young man's most treasured possessions.

"Don't dance with any one but me to-night," said Gerald, in a low voice, as we made our way to the hired carriage waiting outside.

"But how about yourself?" I inquired somewhat suspiciously.

"Only two with Chatty," he answered, and I took my seat beside Mrs. Herring with a light heart, for he had not asked Mrs. Argles to give him any dances after all, and of course to engage

himself to Chatty was an unavoidable duty considering he was staying in the house.

I could hardly suppress a cry of delight when I entered the ball-room, the long polished floor, the lights, and pale pink decorations, and the beautiful dresses mingled with the gay uniforms all made it look like fairyland.

At first I was so dazzled and bewildered by these unaccustomed surroundings that I could hardly see, and allowed Mrs. Herring to introduce me to the principal hostess and a fat man in ordinary evening dress as if I was walking in my sleep. But by degrees my brain cleared, and sticking close to Mrs. Herring's heels, who was greeting various long-lost acquaintances, I began to look about me, and gradually noticed that people were staring at me, and whispering as I passed. I caught one or two remarks here and there, which I knew, from the speakers' faces, referred to myself.

"Who is she? where does she come from?" and I distinctly heard the fat man I have already mentioned say to a lady next him:

"She's a Mrs. Boscawen—civilian's wife; ain't she magnificent?"

My face tingled with pleasure, and I looked up at Gerald for sympathy.

"They're all wondering who you are," he said delightedly, "You've taken them all by storm; such lots of people are asking your name. How I wish I could tell them it was Lady Daintry."

And so did I with all my heart and soul, though I made no answer, and turned away to hide the longing and regret I was showing in my eyes.

Then the band struck up a dreamy swinging waltz, and Mrs. Herring, having seen Chatty carried off by a partner in uniform, whose red coat utterly killed the pink silk, took her place among the other chaperones and partnerless females who sat on a raised platform at the end of the room.

Two or three men were introduced to me by the fat man, who also pleaded for dances on his own account, while Gerald stood by fidgeting with impatience; but I dismissed them all, saying I was not going to dance, and then Gerald and I strolled into a long cool corridor lighted by Chinese lanterns and fragrant with banks of flowers.

We sat down on a low couch in a corner where we were almost hidden by the leaves of a huge fan palm, and where we could just hear the band from the ball-room. We sat in silence for some minutes. I felt suddenly low-spirited and heavy-hearted, for I realized that this was the last time I should spend alone with Gerald, and that it was quickly flying even though it had hardly begun.

"I can't talk," I said desperately, "though I feel as if I had no end to say."

"We must make the most of this evening," he answered, taking my hand; "I mayn't see you alone again for goodness knows how long."

"You will never see me alone again," I answered sadly.

"What are you talking about?" he asked, trying to undo the button of my glove.

"I made up my mind ages ago that after this ball I would have nothing more to do with you."

"Josephine!"

"Yes, I really mean it. I know I've been very wicked, but it's been worth it. And now I'm going to begin again and leave it all behind me."

To my astonishment he only laughed.

"We'll see," he said. "Now let's leave that subject alone and enjoy ourselves. Just hark at that waltz. You must dance with me later on."

"I can't. I promised Andrew I wouldn't dance at all."

"Nonsense. Surely you won't stick at a little thing like that when ——"

"Oh, Gerald, don't say it," I cried sharply, for the words cut me like a knife.

"My darling, what did you think I was going to say?"

I felt suddenly relieved.

"What did you mean?" I asked quickly.

"I was going to say you surely need not feel bound to keep a promise like that when he systematically denies you everything to make your life worth living from pure motives of selfishness."

"Oh, Gerald, I'm so glad. I thought you were going to say something very cruel, though I know I deserve it."

"You need never be afraid of my saying anything cruel to

you," he answered. "I would as soon cut my own throat. D—!"

"Gerald, dear!"

"I beg your pardon. But look at these brutes coming to sit down by us. Now we shall have to go. What a nuisance."

I soon discovered by the snatches of conversation we could overhear, that it was Chatty and her partner who had chosen the retreat next to ours.

"Oh, my! isn't somebody telling crackers," shouted Chatty in answer to some extravagant assertion on the part of her cavalier.

"But 'pon my word," expostulated the youth, but was interrupted by Chatty, who told him "if he didn't shut up she'd box his ears," upon which followed some scuffling and stifled giggles.

"We'd better go," said Gerald impatiently. "I've got the next dance with that little idiot, and after that I must look for some quiet place where we can talk without being disturbed."

But fortune certainly did not favour us the first part of the evening, for when Gerald's dance with Chatty was over, and he brought her back to where Mrs. Herring and I were sitting, his would-be mother-in-law declared she needed refreshment, and requested him to take her to the tea and coffee room, which he did with a very bad grace. Once having got him securely into her clutches, he could not escape until several dances were over, and at last returned to me fuming with rage.

"The old devil!" he exclaimed, as we hurriedly left the ball-room; "she simply *wouldn't* let me go. Every time I tried to get away she introduced me to some confounded friend of hers, who wanted something to eat or drink, or else said she wanted more herself. I won't go near her again this evening."

We had some difficulty in finding a seat, and at last, when we did so, it was amongst a crowd of people.

Gerald was furious.

"There are too many people at this affair," he said crossly; "nobody can really enjoy themselves. There isn't dancing room in the ball-room, or standing room in the verandahs."

"Shall we try supper?" I suggested.

"Yes; we may as well have some; and make a rush for the best place afterwards."

But we found the supper-room a seething mass of struggling

humanity, and it was almost an impossibility to effect even an entrance, so we wandered off in hopes of discovering the solitude we both longed for.

This time we were in luck, and settled ourselves in a delightful nook, well away from any other seats, and secure from intrusion. We were sitting on a broad, low ottoman, with soft silk cushions at our backs, the only light being from some large fairy lamps buried amongst the leaves and plants around us.

"I wonder how soon you'll forget me when I'm gone, Josephine?" he said, leaning forward and looking into my eyes.

"I wish there was a chance of my forgetting you altogether," I said bitterly.

"My poor darling," he said pityingly, "how shall I ever be able to leave you to this awful existence? Oh, darling! if I didn't love you too much, I would ask you to leave it all and come away with me."

"Oh, Gerald," I gasped, "I only wish I could."

He started slightly, and sat in silence for a few minutes, apparently thinking deeply.

"*Would* you come?" he asked in a whisper.

For fully five minutes I sat without speaking, while he waited, never moving his eyes from my face.

I fought out a desperate struggle with myself in that short space of time, and I never realized till afterwards what I went through. How I struggled with the longing that brought the word "yes" to my lips, and how dozens of times I choked it back. Why should I not go away and be happy with Gerald? Who, except himself, cared what I did, or what became of me? And then, above all the surging thoughts, one little sentence throbbed through my brain—"be a brave woman, do what you *know* is right, and you'll never repent it;" though who had said it, and where I had heard it, I could not remember, and did not care.

I tried to speak, for I knew that if I waited any longer the temptation would prove too much for me, and I should say the word he was waiting to hear. I dared not look at him; I dared not touch the hand he was holding out. My temples throbbed as if they would burst, and my eyes felt dry and burning. There was a choking lump in my throat, but speak I must . . . and say *no*.

"Oh! *here* you are," cried a familiar voice, and Chatty's face burst through the screen of leaves in front of us, her hair in wild disorder, and her dress in a state of dilapidation.

"You nasty thing, Sir Gerald. You never came near me for our second dance; and now ma wants to go home. *Isn't* it a bother?"

"Are you going?" I asked helplessly, feeling inclined to burst into hysterical laughter.

"Yes," said Chatty in a resigned voice. "I'm awfully sorry, but perhaps it's just as well. I've burst one of my shoes, and my heel's come off the other, and as for my dress it's simply dropping off my back, so I couldn't dance any more even if we stayed."

"Where is your mother?" I asked rising.

"In the cloak-room. Do come quick; she's in such a rage. You'll catch it, because she thinks it was your fault Sir Gerald didn't come for my dance."

But Mrs. Herring's indignation had no effect whatever on me. She could not say much in the cloak-room as other ladies were present, but when she got Chatty and myself back to the hotel and safely into our bedroom, she poured forth the vials of her wrath, until Chatty interfered and told her mother bluntly that my doings were no business of hers, and that she would go back to England to-morrow if she did not stop at once and leave us to go to bed in peace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LEFT LAMENTING.

"Farewell!

For in that word—that fatal word—howe'er

We promise, hope, believe,—there breathes despair."

THERE was no sleep for me that night. I tossed and turned, wondering when I should see Gerald alone again, and how he would meet me the following morning. I was dreading that he would repeat the question he had asked me by the light of the fairy lamps the evening before, though I knew I should feel wretched if he said nothing more on the subject.

I tried to make up my mind to treat him with such marked coldness and indifference as would lead to his departure from

Kuttahpore, but at the same time I very much doubted whether it would have the desired effect, and was not at all sure that I could keep it up if he refused to go, or simply derided my attempts to send him away.

I was thankful when the morning came, for we were leaving by an early train, and had to be up in good time.

I woke Chatty, who was lying on her back snoring with astonishing violence, and we dressed hurriedly by lamp light. She was very sleepy and rather cross, so directly I was ready I left her to herself, meaning to go to the dining-room for a cup of tea.

Just as I shut the bedroom door behind me, a letter was put into my hand. I tore it open with trembling fingers for something told me it was Gerald's handwriting. I took in the contents at a glance, and then my head swam, and I leant against the wall for support.

He was going away. He had gone! And perhaps I should never see him again as long as I lived.

On going to his room after the ball, he had found a telegram which had been forwarded from Kuttahpore, summoning him home to his mother, who was not expected to live another month, and to enable him to catch the next mail steamer he had been obliged to leave at once, just catching the train between four and five a.m. ". . . . It breaks my heart to leave you without another word," he wrote; "but I dare not delay. It would make a difference of another week, and for all I know it may be a matter of life and death. I am scribbling these few lines in desperate haste, but if I do not write to you now, I shall not be able to say anything of what I feel, as you will have no chance of receiving letters privately. Take care of yourself, my darling, for my sake—for both our sakes, and do not forget me. I only pray that we may meet again before long, and *then*——"

There was no signature, and the writing bore traces of great haste, and as I read it, my first thoughts were for Gerald himself. Poor fellow, how dreadful for him if his mother died, for I knew he loved her dearly, and what terrible suspense and uncertainty he would go through during the long journey home before he could reach her side.

Gerald's mother! How sweet and good she must be. I could imagine her with his eyes, and the same tall, gracious figure, and

I felt more than thankful that I had overcome my temptation the night before, and saved Gerald from going to his mother with dishonour and disgrace hanging over the good old name.

I felt dumbly resigned to my own fate. It was no good to kick against the pricks any longer, and I should have to accept my life as it came, without thought of what might have been, or struggle after anything different.

In a great measure my unhappiness was my own fault. I had taken no advantage of my education, and therefore I had few, if any, resources in myself. Discontent had been at the root of all my troubles, and I had done Andrew as great a wrong in marrying him for what he could give me, as I had done myself.

The only course open to me in which I could recover my self-respect, was to go back to my husband with a determination to forego my youth and the pleasures I had craved for, and do my duty better in the future than I had ever attempted to in the past. I must try to please Andrew in thought now, as well as in deed.

Mrs. Herring had also received a note from Gerald, and with my own safely within my pocket, I said nothing about it, and heard the contents of hers with a proper amount of surprise and conjecture.

"I feel I was a little hasty with you last night," she said, as we stood in the dining-room waiting for Chatty. "I'm afraid there is no doubt that Chatty refused him, poor young man, and naturally he sought your company after such a blow, knowing no one else in the room. Such a nice note he wrote me, saying how *sorry* he was, and asking me to have his things at Kuttahpore forwarded to his agents. I'm sure he received no telegram at all. It was only an excuse to get away and not see Chatty again."

"Perhaps," I murmured, relieved beyond measure that she had chosen to take this view of the case, for now she would forego the complaints she had threatened to make of me to Andrew. Chatty received the news of Gerald's departure with unconcealed satisfaction.

"I'm very glad he's gone," she announced with her usual candour, as we took our seats in the train, "and I hope I shall never see him again."

"Oh, Chatty, be content with sending the poor man away like this, and don't speak ill of him behind his back," said Mrs.

Herring, who was struggling manfully to conceal her mortification and disappointment. "But I do wish he had consulted me before going off in such a hurry."

"Good gracious, ma! You wouldn't have cured his mother for him," exclaimed Chatty.

"Ah! but I'm pretty certain his mother had nothing to do with it," said Mrs. Herring, shaking her head mysteriously.

"Who had, then?" asked Chatty sharply.

"My darling, if *you* don't know, I wonder who does?"

"Oh, ma, what *have* you got into your head now?" said Chatty, giving me a surreptitious kick. "I wish you'd talk sense. I never was any good at double acrostics."

The young lady buried her head in a book and took no further notice of her mother, who sighed pathetically, and really looked so miserable that I felt quite sorry for her.

We were a most unsociable trio that morning; my head and heart were full of Gerald, and Mrs. Herring was silently occupied in regretting the brilliant "chance" that Chatty had so foolishly thrown away, while her daughter was apparently deeply interested in her book, and only laid it down when we got out at the station, where the barouche was waiting for the Herrings and our own wagonette for me.

I was very glad Andrew had not come to meet me, and was not sorry to find that I had a drive of nearly four miles in prospect before reaching the place where he was encamped, as it gave me time to pull myself together and think quietly over the future.

"Well, Andrew, how are you?" I asked as we entered the tent together on my arrival; "you are looking much better."

I told him of Sir Gerald's departure, and as much about the ball as I thought would interest him, also assuring him, in reply to his inquiries, that I had not danced once.

"Did that fellow propose to Miss Herring?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," I answered cautiously, "but Mrs. Herring seemed to think he had, and that her refusal was the real reason of his going off so suddenly."

"Ah, very likely," said Andrew; "she generally hits the right nail on the head. A very shrewd woman is Mrs. Herring. Her knowledge of human nature is marvellous. I wish you were a little more like her, Josie, my dear; but that could hardly be expected; she's one woman in a thousand."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DUST-STORM.

"The land of darkness and the shadow of death."—2 *Kings*, x., 21.

"BREAKFAST is ready, Andrew," I shouted. "Do make haste."

It was a hideously hot morning in April, nearly ten weeks after I had rejoined Andrew in camp, and I was sitting idly by the table on which breakfast was laid, waiting for my husband to come in.

He was outside the tent questioning some villagers who had arrived in a body to present a petition, and it struck me that it was rather rash of him to stay out so long in the sun, even though he was wearing a pith hat, for it was nearly twelve o'clock in the day, and the heat was intense.

I went to the door and called him again, telling him he ought to be careful of the sun, but he waved me back impatiently, saying he was coming presently, so I returned to my seat to wait for him.

For the last two months and more we had marched monotonously about the district, with nothing to mark the long weary days, as each one passed exactly like its uneventful predecessor.

We had seen nobody, not even Mr. Pierce, who had important work elsewhere in the district, and also a great deal to do in Kuttahpore itself. Mechanically I had carried out Andrew's wishes in every detail during this tedious interminable time; I had haggled energetically over every payment that had to be made, sewed, patched and darned his clothes and my own, and made no complaints or requests for a different state of affairs, as I had sometimes done in the days before I met Gerald.

All this delighted Andrew immensely; he noticed the change, and informed me that I had improved very much, and that he was glad I had come round to his ways of thinking; and confidently asserted that he had always felt sure, even when I had seemed most inclined to be frivolous, that his judgment could not have played him false when it had prompted him to make me his wife.

And now it was becoming uncomfortably hot, and I longed to

exchange the close, stuffy tents for our large airy house. The past fortnight had been almost unbearable with all its miseries of stifling heat, burning wind and dust by day, and maddening clouds of mosquitos by night. But whenever I had broached the subject to Andrew of returning to Kuttahpore, he had only seemed obstinately determined to stay out in camp so long as it was barely possible to exist in tents.

I not only wished to return to the station for the sake of getting into a cool house, but I also longed to see Chatty Herring, from whom I might possibly hear something of Gerald, for even if he had not written to them himself, Mrs. Herring might have had news of him from "her sister Eliza."

I knew perfectly well that Andrew would never hear of my writing to Douglas Daintry; besides I did not know where he was, as I had seen in the paper that he had taken six months' leave just after the Patwa ball, and no doubt had been sent for, like Gerald, to go home.

Sometimes I had half expected Gerald would write to me himself, but when I considered the matter calmly I came to the conclusion that he could not very well do so without causing a good deal of surprise to Andrew, and perhaps arousing his suspicion, for he had merely regarded Gerald as the most casual acquaintance so far as I was concerned.

No, he could not very well write to me himself, but I felt that he would very likely try to correspond with the Herrings, knowing I should hear of him through this medium.

"Poof! You were right about the sun, Josie," said Andrew, when he at last came in, hot and exhausted from his conference outside, "but I really couldn't allow those fellows to go till they had thoroughly taken in my meaning. They're so confoundedly stupid in this part of the world."

He threw himself wearily into his chair, and passed his hand over his forehead. I noticed that he looked flushed and tired, and thought it would be a good opportunity when he was actually feeling the heat, to urge him to go into the station at once instead of waiting another week, as I knew he intended doing.

"Can't you eat any breakfast, Andrew?" I asked, as he sent his plate away without tasting what was on it.

"No," he replied fretfully, "I've no appetite this morning, and I've got a bad headache; I think I must have some soda water."

"Don't you think, as we're only ten miles from Kuttahpore, we'd better go straight in to-morrow?" I suggested. "I'm sure the heat is knocking you up."

"Not at all," he answered; "I've only got a headache from standing out so long in the sun. I never go into the station till I can't help myself, and I don't mean to alter my rules this year more than any other. Besides, there is a great deal that wants attending to just about here."

"But really, Andrew, this sort of weather in tents is simply unbearable. I can't sleep for the heat or eat for the flies."

"My dear Josie, you're mistaken. You would find it even hotter in the station. The heat is not at all unbearable, and of course I shall take you in directly it becomes seriously hot."

Andrew shut his mouth with a snap, which was a signal that further remonstrance was useless, so I went on with my breakfast in silence, while my husband fidgeted restlessly in his chair and now and then fanned himself with his table napkin, though nothing would induce him to own that he felt hotter than usual.

However, when the breakfast things had been cleared away, he did not settle to his work, but walked up and down the tent, sitting on each chair in succession, and seeming very restless and out of sorts, which was no wonder, for the heat was appalling.

I myself could do nothing but lean back in my hard, uncomfortable chair, with only just enough energy left in me to flick away the flies that settled persistently on my face.

The air grew hotter and hotter, and Andrew's complexion assumed the colour of a brick.

"I think we're going to have a storm," he gasped; "it's hotter than it ought to be."

"Andrew," I implored, "you're *not* well; you can't say you are. *Do* make arrangements to go into the station."

I felt almost on the verge of tears, and a strange leaden presentiment took possession of me for which I could not account. But indeed it seemed as if something unusual must be going to happen, for the wind suddenly ceased, and there was an ominous calm in the air, while the patch of sky visible through the tent door looked scorched and burnt to a livid metallic hue.

There was a singular absence of all sound. No murmuring of servants' voices, not a bird's cry, nor so much as the bark of a dog from the village near. Every thing living seemed to be in

hiding, only some huge brown kites turned and wheeled silently in the air.

The stillness was suffocating, and I looked at Andrew in alarm.

"What is going to happen?" I cried. I had never seen the signs of an approaching dust storm before.

Andrew was sitting forward in his chair, with his lips parted, and his face flushed to a deep dull red. He was certainly feeling the heat very severely, as well he might, for in the last few minutes it had increased a hundred-fold.

However, he still would not own it, and scarcely answered me when I asked him rather anxiously if his head was worse.

Feeling as if I could hardly breathe, I rose to go to the tent door, when something odd in his expression made me turn towards him instead, and as I did so he stretched out his arms with a sudden desperate movement and called my name twice. Then he fell forward like a log, and lay senseless on his face at my feet.

For one second I stood, hardly able to move, looking at the figure on the ground, while a slow grumbling sound rose on the heated atmosphere, and the air grew dark with a dense volume of copper-coloured dust.

Then I knelt down by my husband's side, and, putting my arms round him, I exerted all my strength and turned him over. His breath was coming in slow, noisy puffs, and there was a little froth on the corners of his mouth; his eyes were open, but looked dull and glassy, and his hands, when I felt them, were deadly cold.

I called aloud for the servants, but they had all taken refuge in the kitchen tent from the storm, and no one heard me. The air grew almost quite dark, and the wind rose shrieking and screaming with mad fury, whirling the thick masses of dust about and flinging them down on to the tent, shaking it with such violence that every moment I expected the poles to fall. I sat trembling on the ground, with Andrew's head in my lap, peering through the gloom at his face, which had so strangely altered in a few short minutes.

I groped with one hand for the table, which was close to me, and, pulling off the cloth, I rolled it into a bundle and placed it under Andrew's head, and then I rose and went out into the blinding dust to find somebody to help me. I could hardly see two yards ahead. Leaves and little pieces of stick and stone

struck me in the face, and the wind nearly lifted me off my feet ; still I groped on, with my hands stretched out, calling for the servants with all my strength.

At last to my relief I heard an answering shout, and presently saw the figure of old Nazuf Ali struggling through the turmoil of dust and wind.

"Come quickly!" I screamed ; "run ! run !"

I turned back to the tent, and as I did so the air began to clear a little, and a large drop of rain fell on to my bare head.

I found Andrew as I had left him, the thick snoring sound still issuing from his lips, and with Nazuf Ali's help I loosened his clothes and bathed his head and face with water. We tried to force some whisky down his throat, but his teeth were tightly clenched, and it only ran out at the corners of his mouth.

I sat in terror and perplexity, with Andrew's head resting against my shoulder like a lump of lead, as the other servants dropped in one by one and stood looking on with awe-stricken faces while Nazuf Ali alternately rubbed his master's hands and feet, and implored him to speak to him, or "wake up."

There seemed no sign of his regaining consciousness, and I did not know whether to take him straight in to Kuttahpore, or send a man to fetch Dr. Herring out to us.

I finally decided, with the help of the servants' advice, to adopt the first course, and in a few minutes, when the storm had cleared off with a few heavy, pattering drops of rain, leaving the air cooler and fresher, and a thick white covering of dust over everything, the wagonette was ready to take us into the station.

The servants had arranged a board across the body of the carriage, on which they laid Andrew, still unconscious, supported with rugs and pillows, while I stood watching them, the full force of my utter helplessness rushing over me.

It had all happened so suddenly. I had scarcely begun to realize that it was *Andrew* who lay there, with his face so distorted as to be hardly recognizable, and the only sign of life about him the heavy, stertorous breathing. I felt numbed, and incapable of thinking or feeling, as I took my place on the front seat of the wagonette, and the long drive of ten miles that followed, through the now rapidly-cooling air, seemed as unreal as a dream.

(*To be continued.*)

Pride's Punishment.

CHAPTER I.

"You shall not sin,
If you do say we think him over-proud."
"Troilus and Cressida."

BERNARD FILMER was to be married on the morrow. He and Helen Lermitte had been engaged exactly two months, and during that time he had done much. His regiment had been stationed in India three years, and the very day the news came that it was ordered home, he proposed to Helen Lermitte, was accepted, and sent in his papers at once. He also wrote to his mother, telling her of his engagement, of his impending marriage, and of his speedy return home. Then he gave a series of bachelor parties to his brother officers in such style that they declared him to be a very decent fellow, and now, this last night of his freedom, he sat alone, satisfied with himself and his future and dreaming blissful dreams.

Helen Lermitte was the daughter of Judge Lermitte, who came out a young lawyer to India early in the "fifties," had married a girl with money and never returned to England. He belonged to a good English family, with whom he had quarrelled; why, no one knew or cared. Nor did it signify, for in India, ten years is the utmost extent that one looks back for a man's antecedents, and the judge's had been irreproachable for more than forty. Moreover he had great wealth. For his money Bernard Filmer cared nothing; for his descent—a very great deal. He was a fastidiously proud man. More rather than less, he had known Helen for two years, but had foreborne to speak to her until he could retire. Then, as I said before, the very day that he heard that his regiment was ordered home, he spoke, and was at once accepted.

He had finished his last pipe, and was about to turn in for the night, when his man appeared in the doorway. Before he could open his lips, Filmer said very decidedly:

"I'll not see a soul, Jones. Tell them I've gone to bed."

"Certainly, sir. It's the judge, sir."

"The judge! Oh, by all means show him in," and when the man had gone he thought, "What the dickens does he want at this time of night? Nothing the matter with Helen, I hope."

Judge Lermotte was a tall, fine-looking man of about sixty. His life in India seemed to have agreed with him, for he was hale and fresh-coloured. Nevertheless, he looked anxious and uneasy. Filmer observed it, and giving him a chair waited for him to speak.

"It's of Helen—No, she's quite well. Don't be frightened."

"All right. If she's well, nothing else can matter much."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," replied the judge. "But there's something that—er—perhaps I ought to have told you before. Although I love her as much as any father could, she's no child of mine."

Filmer jumped to his feet, and demanded in a furious tone:

"Whose child is she, then?"

"I don't know. Twenty years ago my wife—she was alive then—and I went up to Mudgepore for a little change; we were only able to get a few days, and the day before we came away a baby of about a month old was found in a box in the compound of our bungalow. There were a few air holes in the lid of the box, but not a mark of any kind to lead to identification, either on the child's clothes—which were of the poorest description—or on the box itself. My wife took a fancy to the child and implored me to adopt it. I refused at first, but finding that her heart was set on my doing so I consented. We had her baptized Helen, my wife's name, and from that day to this she has always been with me, for when my wife died I was too fond of the child to part with her."

"And you haven't the faintest idea who her parents are?"

"Not the faintest. There were only eight white people—all told—when we were at Mudgepore, and there had been no white child born there for six months."

Filmer's rage burst forth.

The judge waited quietly until he had finished, then he simply said:

"I presume you wish to break the engagement."

"Break the engagement," he thundered; "jilt a girl at the eleventh hour! What do you take me for?"

"For an honest gentleman," replied the judge warmly; "but I

shall be a desolate old man when Helen is gone," and without another word he left the room.

As soon as he found himself alone, Filmer sat down and began to look at the thing squarely. Without doubt it was a bitter pill for a proud man to swallow! Still Helen was innocent. She knew nothing about her birth. Of that he felt sure. Nor, as far as he knew, was there a living soul beside the judge who was wiser than Helen on that point. Besides it might well be that Helen's birth was as good as his own. Privately he would try and find out if any white child had been stolen about twenty years ago. He would put the matter into the hands of a lawyer he knew, who was sharp as a needle and secret as death. He would do this before he left India. In the meantime, he would banish the hideous affair from his mind, and think only of Helen; of Helen herself, apart from her birth. As he was very much in love, and as Helen was very sweet and beautiful, he had no difficulty in doing this.

Well, they were married, and a month after the wedding set sail for England. Before they sailed, Bernard Filmer instructed the "sharp and secret" one to make inquiries. For the present he was too much in love to be very anxious about the result. But "count no man happy until he is dead," says the proverb. About a week before the end of the voyage came trouble. One day Filmer found Helen weeping in her cabin. He tried to comfort her, begging her to tell him what ailed her.

"It's father's birthday," she sobbed. "He is so miserable now I have left him. I can't help thinking about him."

"Don't, Helen; don't, my sweet," said her husband, pulling her on his knee and kissing her tenderly. "I assure you your father is not lonely. He is much respected and has many friends in Bombay, and I daresay elsewhere."

"Didn't he tell you, the night before our wedding, why his relations in England will have nothing to do with me?"

"Yes. He told me. How long have you known, Helen?" this was said gravely.

"Why do you look like that? I've known since my eighteenth birthday. Do you think I ought to have told you?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, Helen, I do."

"But I couldn't. Father said I was never to speak about it."

"Then you ought never to have accepted me," said he shortly.

And then they quarrelled. Which was a small matter. But they didn't make it up. Which was a great one!

You see, he considered it was her duty to say that she was sorry she allowed him to be deceived. And she considered that she'd done nothing to be sorry about. Therefore, as there was a fine streak of obstinacy in both their tempers, they were outwardly extremely polite, and inwardly intensely miserable. And they were on these terms when they arrived at Filmer Grange on a visit to his mother and sister.

They got there about tea-time on a chill November day. The bride was received very warmly by Mrs. Filmer and Grace. They made much of her, and after tea took her to her room themselves. After seeing that she was comfortable they left her to rest before she dressed for dinner. Then mother and daughter made expeditious toilettes, and met in the former's boudoir in order to compare notes.

"Well, mother, what do you think of her?" asked Grace.

"She is very pretty."

"Mother, dear, I have eyes."

"Yes, of course," said Mrs. Filmer absently, and then pulling herself together she added, "the truth is, Grace, I don't understand Bernard's manner to his wife."

"He is very polite and friendly," answered Grace. "But if he were my husband and he treated me so—I think, I really think I should get a pistol and shoot him!"

"Grace," cried Mrs. Filmer reprovingly.

"Well, mother, I can't help it. I was looking forward to our all being happy together. Instead, I believe we are all going to be miserable."

"Hush!" exclaimed her mother; "I hear Bernard's footstep." In another moment he entered the room.

He was tall and handsome and looked well, but his face wore a grave, almost severe, expression. He was not at all like the brother from whom Grace had parted three years before. Then he seemed a boy. Now, at seven-and-twenty, he looked old and grave enough for fifty!

"I thought I should find you here," and he kissed his mother. Then turning to Grace he held her at arms' length, scanning her from head to foot.

"You've grown pretty," said he, "despite your snub nose." Grace made him a low courtesy.

"How kind it is of you to say so," she exclaimed. "You can't think how I have dreaded this moment. The last verdict you passed on my unfortunate phiz was, 'It's impossible for a girl with a snub like yours to help being plain!'"

"Perhaps I've been rash," said he coolly. "We shall see how you look in the morning."

"Mother, dear," he went on, "you talked about leaving The Grange when I married. I want to beg of you to do nothing of the kind. I want things to go on just as they have always done."

"What does Helen say to that?"

"You will find that Helen likes whatever I like."

"How sweet!" exclaimed Grace. But her brother took no notice of her. Mrs. Filmer spoke again.

"You see Grace is only just out, and I owe it to her that I should entertain on my own account, which I could not do in a house of which I was not mistress—besides young married people are better alone."

"I daresay I shall be away a great deal," said he carelessly, "and Helen will be glad of your company."

"Well, well; we'll talk about it by-and-bye. We'd better go down to the drawing-room now, or Helen 'll be there before us."

Helen *was* in the drawing-room. She was standing near the fire, looking down into the burning coals. She wore a pale blue plush gown, trimmed with costly white lace. Her hair was piled high on her head, and in it she wore a pearl comb. If Mrs. Filmer had thought her pretty in her winter wraps, she thought her lovely now. Her face was very sad, but when Mrs. Filmer spoke to her, she turned and smiled immediately.

"I am shocked you should be here alone, You must think us very rude."

"No," said she, smiling again. A very sweet smile was hers.

When the three were alone after dinner, Mrs. Filmer told Helen what Bernard had said about her and Grace staying at The Grange, adding:

"But, my dear, of course I can't consent to this arrangement, if you have the slightest feeling against it."

"I have not," she replied quickly. "I should like it very much."

"I am afraid you'll find this place very different from Bombay. Do you like India?" asked Grace.

"Yes. I've never lived anywhere else."

"Didn't you come to school in England?"

"No. I've never been educated. I've always been with my father. I travelled about with him everywhere, and had lessons whenever it was possible."

"He must miss you very much."

"He does. Oh, he does!" and hardly able to suppress her tears she left the room. Grace wanted to follow her, but her mother stopped her.

"Mother, what can be the matter? I'm sure they are neither of them happy."

Mrs. Filmer shook her head. In a few minutes Helen returned and apologized very prettily to Mrs. Filmer for her little outburst.

Just then Bernard came into the room, and after a moment asked Grace to sing something.

"But, Helen—if you are not too tired, won't you sing something?"

Bernard opened the piano. His wife evidently looked on this as an expression of his desire that she should sing. She had a lovely voice and sang well, so well that Grace begged off singing that night.

After breakfast next morning Mrs. Filmer suggested that as it was fine and frosty, Bernard might like to take his wife round the park.

"I'm afraid I'm too busy this morning," he replied. "But a walk would do Grace a deal of good. She's dreadfully fat and out of condition."

Grace surveyed her own pretty plump little figure for a moment.

"Slanderer!" she exclaimed, shaking her finger at him. "Come along, Helen. We'll go and see if the ice is likely to bear to-morrow; and if it is, we'll give him a lovely time, putting on our skates and piloting us round."

Helen seemed pleased, and they both went off to put on their wraps. When they came down, Mrs. Filmer and Bernard went into the hall—she to give Grace a message for the woman at the lodge; he to see that Helen was properly wrapped up. He went

over to her, and, without any tenderness in his tone, said, "Lift up your chin." She did so, and he examined the fastening of her jacket.

"This doesn't meet properly," said he, and he fetched a thick white silk wrap of his own and tied it round her pretty throat. He couldn't have noticed the soft pink flush on her sweet face, or he must have kissed her. Instead, he bestowed a careless brotherly salute on Grace.

Mother and son watched them run down the hall steps together. Then Mrs. Filmer followed her son into the library.

"Bernard," said she, "I don't understand your manner to your wife."

"Indeed, mother," said he quietly. "In what way?"

His tone was not inviting, and Mrs. Filmer was surprised to find that she found it difficult to speak to him. She, his mother, who had nursed, scolded and praised him—been mother and father both to him since her husband died—was embarrassed and dumb. She began to realize that this tall, dignified, bearded creature was a man. True, he was her son, but their relations seemed, not changed exactly, but different. From that moment she found that she was no longer the commander.

"Well, mother, in what way?" he repeated. An amused expression robbed his features for one moment of their sombre gravity.

Still his mother could not speak.

"You want to ask me some question about Helen, don't you, dear? And you find it difficult to say what you wish because I'm no longer a little boy?" and he smiled again.

Mrs. Filmer felt nettled.

"Perhaps it will do as well if I tell you what Grace said last night."

"What was it?"

"She said if she were Helen, and you treated her in that polite friendly fashion, she should shoot you."

"It is to be hoped Helen won't do that," said he coolly.

"No, poor child. She loves you too well."

"She loves Judge Lermotte better," he replied bitterly.

"Her father? Fiddle-de-dee!"

"Mother, dear, this is a matter between me and Helen, and——"

"You'd rather I did not interfere?"

"Very good of you, dear," said he gently. "I assure you, Helen is the best girl in the world, and worthy of all the love and affection you and Grace can give her."

"I am sure of that," his mother replied warmly.

CHAPTER II.

"Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven."—*All's Well that Ends Well.*"

A MONTH passed. Bernard and Helen seemed on the same footing. Grace privately informed her mother that she supposed it was the fashion in India for husband and wife to be so civil to each other. It wouldn't suit her, but as she was never likely to go to India, that didn't signify. Mrs. Filmer only shook her head.

Meantime Bernard had not heard from the "sharp and secret" one.

One evening they all went to a ball given by Lady Towton. Here Helen was astonished to find her "double" in a Miss Kate Marchmont, only daughter of General and Mrs. Marchmont. The Marchmonts were new-comers, and they and Helen both made their first appearance in public at Lady Towton's ball. It was amusing, the way in which they were mistaken for each other. Helen wore her bridal gown, and Miss Marchmont also wearing a white gown aided the deception. But the greatest joke of all was when General Marchmont himself came up and said to Helen:

"Now, Kate, your mother is looking for you. It's time we were going." Then he tucked her hand under his arm, and was walking her off, when Mrs. Filmer, who was standing by laughing, came to the rescue, saying:

"That's my girl—not yours, general."

"Nonsense, my dear madam. Miss Grace is dancing with my son. They passed a minute ago."

"But this young lady is my son's wife. Allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Bernard Filmer."

The general dropped Helen's hand and stared at her, rubbed his glasses, and stared again.

"I—I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, at length convinced. "But don't you see the likeness to my Kitty yourself, madam?"

"It is most striking," agreed Mrs. Filmer.

"It's astounding," replied the general, emphasizing his words with a slight stamp of his foot.

"It's too late to speak to my wife about it to-night, but if you'll allow me I'll bring her over to call on you to-morrow. Where is that Kitty?"

"I think Miss Marchmont is in the conservatory with Lord Milton," said Mrs. Filmer mischievously.

"Conservatory. I'll——" and off the old gentleman hurried.

The Filmers had all come over together in the big landau, but as Grace and her mother were going to stay all night at Lady Towton's and return home to lunch next day, there was a twelve miles' drive for Bernard and his wife together. It was past two o'clock when he came and asked her if she was ready to go.

"Quite ready. I'll say good-night to your mother and Grace at once."

They made their adieux and were soon in the carriage driving home.

There are a good many unpleasant things to put up with as one goes through life, and a long drive, on a dark night, in a close carriage, with a silent displeased husband, is not one of the least. And the fact that you are dying to throw your arms round the displeased husband's neck, but don't dare, rather increases the misery of the situation than not.

For the first mile neither of them spoke. They each leaned back in their own corner of the carriage. Helen closed her eyes and pretended to go to sleep. Then she opened them again to see if his eyes were shut. No. They were wide open. He was looking straight before him.

"How long will it take to drive back?" she asked.

"About two hours. The roads are heavy and hilly."

"Oh. Isn't it very cold?"

"Very. You had better have both rugs," and he proceeded to divest himself of his.

"Bernard, you shall not," she exclaimed.

He shrugged his shoulders and leaned back in his own corner again.

Dead silence.

"Bernard, do you think I'm like Miss Marchmont?"

"Yes."

"Do you think she is pretty?"

"Rather," coolly.

"Oh," flatly.

Silence again. After a time :

"You used to think me pretty once."

"I daresay."

"You called me lovely," reproachfully.

"Did I?" unconcernedly.

Helen began to cry. After she had cried for about ten minutes, her husband, in his turn, broke the silence.

"Helen," he said severely, "if you don't cease crying at once, I shall go and sit outside."

This was too terrible. Almost instantly Helen left off.

"I should *very* much like to know what you are crying about," he added with asperity.

Helen said nothing. Perhaps she felt it was his turn to talk now.

"Why don't you answer me?" angrily.

This was a good sign. He hadn't been angry with her since they had been in England. Still his wife spoke not.

"*Will* you answer me?" and he raised his hand as if to pull the check cord.

"Because—because—I'm so miserable," stammered she in haste, lest he should stop the carriage and go outside.

"Pshaw!" contemptuously.

Helen decided that she certainly would not speak to him any more. He certainly could care nothing for her if all he could say was "pshaw" when she told him that she was miserable.

Therein she was wrong. He was quite as angry with himself as he was with her. For he was no fool, and he was beginning to see the "size" of things. He began to remember that his wife was very young, and if she looked at things through the spectacles of a man who had rescued her from a life of beggary, and had loved and cherished her all her days, was she so much to blame? Perhaps it would be better to chide her gently and to forgive her? Especially as he found life under existing circumstances anything but pleasant to himself.

Therefore, as a preliminary :

"Are you very cold?" he asked.

Her hands were like ice. She gently touched his cheek with the tips of her fingers.

"Why, you are nearly frozen," he exclaimed. "What a brute I am. After living all your life in that hot place, too." He gathered her two hands in his and rubbed them. In a moment, I am sure neither of them could tell how it came about, her head was on his breast and she was sobbing out:

"Oh, Bernard, I'm so sorry. But I never felt I was doing wrong in not telling you."

"There, there, darling, say nothing more about it," and he kissed her again and again.

But now his wife was eager to show him how little she was really to blame.

"You see, Bernard dear, it was not as if father had broken the law. He was only *wild*. Young men in England are sometimes wild, aren't they?"

"Oh, dear, yes, little one," said her husband, wondering what on earth she was talking about.

"Were you ever wild, Bernard?"

"Well, no, I don't think I ever was. It's not in my line," said he smiling.

"Perhaps if you had been, you wouldn't have been so hard on me for not talking about poor father."

The carriage lamp shone full on her husband's face. She thought he looked rather puzzled.

"I don't think he was going to tell me anything about it, but on my eighteenth birthday he gave me one present with his own hands, and then, while we were at tiffin, a lot more came directed in various handwritings, and when I asked him where they all came from he laughed and said, 'Oh, from all the aunts, uncles and cousins you *ought* to have had,' and then he told me that when he was young he had been a great trouble to his people, and that they had sent him out to India, and that he was so angry with them that he had never written to any one of them since." Here Helen stopped again to look at her husband. To her surprise, he still looked mystified.

"Oh dear," she exclaimed, "don't you understand?"

"Can't say that I see what all this has to do with our quarrel."

"But you do understand that I didn't think that I was bound to tell you about father's young days when I really didn't know what he had done."

"Of course you were not bound to tell. I should have been very much surprised if you *had* told me."

"Then why were you angry with me for not telling?" she demanded, raising her head to stare at him.

"Whew!" whistled he. "Do you think that the judge came down to my bungalow at midnight in order to tell me *that*?"

"Yes."

"Well, he didn't."

"What did he come for, then?"

"Never mind, sweetheart," and Bernard kissed his wife again and again.

All her coaxing got nothing more out of him, but she didn't care much; she was only too happy that they were friends once more.

Just before the carriage stopped he said, "My sweet, put both arms round my neck and say, 'Bernard, I forgive you for being a hasty fool.'"

She put her arms round his neck and said:

"Bernard, I love you so much that I only wish I'd anything to forgive."

"Sweet wife," he replied. What he thought was, "If ever a man deserved to be kicked for behaving like an ass that man is myself. How I contrived to make such a hash of things generally is more than I can imagine. It's a happy thing for me that I've an angel for a wife."

Next morning Bernard had a curious letter from Judge Lermite. It contained two inclosures, marked respectively 1 and 2, and addressed, "General Marchmont." From his letter it seemed that the judge had also been making inquiries respecting Helen's parentage, and being a judge, and therefore knowing something of the native police, and having some influence in that quarter, had been more successful than the "sharp and secret." In his letter the judge requested Bernard to give the general Inclosure 1, and afterwards, if he asked for it, Inclosure 2. He seemed to be aware that the Marchmonts lived at Bush Hall, near the Filmers. His letter to Bernard was short, but he sent a long one to Helen, with which she was delighted.

Mrs. Filmer and Grace returned to lunch. After lunch Grace said saucily, "I really believe you two have kissed and made it up. I hope you didn't give in too easily, Helen. He wants keeping in his place, my dear." Then she turned and fled.

General and Mrs. Marchmont called about four o'clock. Mrs. Marchmont seemed much struck with Helen's likeness to her daughter. While she was talking with her about India Bernard took the old gentleman aside, and gave him Inclosure 1. He looked rather surprised, but with a word of apology walked to the window and read it. Then he asked Bernard for No. 2. When it was given him he said carelessly—although the pallor of his face betrayed his inward anxiety—"Can I go into the library? These letters require careful reading."

Bernard took him across the hall into the library, and was leaving the room when the general stopped him.

"Don't go away. Stay until I've read this letter. I think it concerns you."

Bernard sat down opposite the general, watching him as he read. Presently Inclosure 1 was put in his hand. It commenced :

"DEAR SIR,

"Although personally unknown to you, I am aware that you were in India, stationed at Mundore, in '72, and that whilst you were there Mrs. Marchmont was confined with twin daughters, one of whom was born dead. Am I right in believing that the dead child was at once taken away and buried without either you or its mother having seen it? If so, ask Bernard Filmer for Inclosure 2."

When Bernard had finished he waited for the general to speak.

"What you have read is quite true," said he. "I was away when the children were born. When I returned in the evening my wife was delirious, and the dead child already buried."

"But I suppose the doctor knew it was dead," said Bernard, thinking that the judge had discovered that the child had been buried alive.

"There was no doctor. The children were born prematurely. My wife disliked the regimental doctor, and was attended by a native woman, and although I sent for McEwan directly I found she was so ill, he was not present at the birth."

"I see," said Bernard, still puzzled as to where his concern in the matter came in.

"Well, Judge Lermite tells me in Inclosure 2 that he had just been called to hear the confession of a native woman dying from cholera. She stated that she had attended my wife in her confinement. That she had taken away the second born of the twins, supposing it to be dead, but that on afterwards discovering it was alive the temptation seized her to steal the child. It was on this account that she pretended to take umbrage at McEwan being called in, and took herself off the next day without saying a word to any one. She kept the babe until it was about six weeks old, when she was so terrified by the wife of a soldier whom she met up in the hills near Mudgepore telling her that she believed she had stolen it, that she resolved to get rid of the child at once; which she did by placing it at sunrise one morning in the compound of a bungalow at Mudgepore."

Bernard started to his feet.

"You don't mean ——" he stammered.

"Yes, my dear boy, I do. The judge feels convinced that your wife is my child."

The young man was now to the full as excited as General Marchmont.

"And you? What do you think?"

"I hope and trust it may prove true. The great resemblance existing between your wife and Kitty seems to point that way. But it will be better to keep the matter to ourselves until the judge himself comes to England, which it seems he intends doing at once."

"So Helen says. I quite agree with you that nothing had better be said until then."

Next month, when the judge arrived in England, it was proved beyond a doubt that Helen was Kitty Marchmont's twin sister. And the only person dissatisfied with the result was the judge. He thought it his duty to bring forward his proofs, but was disgusted when he found them accepted.

A. E. NOBLE.

"The House that Jack Built."

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "FAIR KATHERINE," "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DECEIVERS EVER.

It was the last day of the year, a cold, bright, frosty December morning, with a cloudless sky overhead. A thin veil of snow thrown lightly over the trees and rocks, the houses and streets of St. Helier's, on the piers and the ships in the harbour, gave Jersey a strange appearance, for snow is not common there, on this thirty-first of December as Felix Oxburgh landed.

He was met by Mrs. Lockwood, who, in a sealskin hat and jacket, looked more than usually pretty, and as the cousins drove off many a head was turned to look at the beautiful Mrs. Lockwood and her great handsome squire.

"Is there any news, Felix?" said Amy, when she had sympathized with him on the horrors of the sea passage, for he was a wretched sailor.

"Yes, unless you have heard it already. Frances has presented Selsey with twin daughters, and he is highly delighted."

"That is news indeed. And how are Aunt and Uncle Oxburgh? I seem to have quite lost sight of them since I married. It is so sad. I often think of the happy days I spent at Oxburgh, when we were all like one family," said Amy, with a slightly injured air, which implied it was no fault of hers that the intimacy was broken off.

"Oh! I have a message for you from my father; he hopes you will arrange to spend the first fortnight you are in England at Oxburgh. I expect you will hear from my mother about it while I am here," said Felix.

"Oh! I am glad. We shall be delighted to go; it is so long since I have seen them. And how is dear Joy—is she very happy?"

"I didn't think her in very good spirits at Christmas, although Graham was over for a few days; but she has everything to

manage now, and perhaps it is too much for her. Joy is very young to have so much responsibility thrown on her shoulders, and I fancied she seemed worried."

"I don't wonder at it. Frances did all that in the old days. I should not think housekeeping was much in Joy's line; they ought to have a housekeeper; I always told them so. When Joy marries they will be obliged to," said Amy as she drove up to her house, where Green was on the look-out for them.

Green had been nearly three months in Jersey, and had kept the pledge faithfully, though in his capacity of butler he had many opportunities of breaking it; and the real object of Felix's visit to Jersey was to bring him and Rose together again, as Green shrewdly suspected.

Amy, unaware of this, took the compliment to herself, and thought she was the magnet which had drawn her handsome cousin across the Channel.

Amy was feeling very much worried. Every post brought her a bill, and her quarterly allowance, half of which she owed Felix and Miss Keppel, only sufficed to pay them and Janvrin's quarterly sum on account, and left nothing for her other creditors. Janvrin was getting very importunate, and Amy felt sure he would not let her leave the island unless she paid a large part of his bill, and to do this she was relying almost entirely on Felix to be her banker.

"I thought we would go by train to Gorey Castle after luncheon, Felix, and stop at Saumarez on the way back and have tea with my aunts," said Amy at luncheon.

"Yes, dear; I am at your disposal. The only thing I must do here is to go to Sark one day next week. I thought we might get up a little picnic and take Green with us to wait on us," said Felix.

"Delightful! We will ask Aunt Sophy and Aunt Lydia to come with us; it will do Aunt Sophy good to get out, and Aunt Lydia will amuse us with her girlishness. She is more skittish than ever since Aunt Dorcas eloped; thereto hangs a tale, which I will tell you this afternoon," said Amy.

And as they travelled on the miniature railway which skirts the coast from St. Helier's to Gorey, Amy told her cousin the tale of Miss Dorcas's engagement and marriage; but Felix was so interested in looking at the wet purple sands gleaming under

the sun, which was now getting low on the horizon ; on the long foam-crested green waves of the ebbing tide ; on the succession of quaint round martello towers, which rise like Norman watchmen at intervals along the shore ; on the stacks of *vraic* and carts of the same on the beach ; on the sea-gulls floating in waving circles close to the surface of the waves and walking about the wet sand, purple in the afternoon light from the sea-weed which covers it ; he was so interested in all this, after the London slums he spent his time in, that he only grasped one fact, namely, that Amy had successfully imitated her aunt's writing.

However, later in the afternoon, when they went to Saumarez Cottage to tea, he tried to recall the story. Miss Lydia was charmed with Felix, and as he, with his usual courtesy, talked to her, her susceptible nature fell a prey to his fascinations ; and by the time Amy rose to go she was over head and ears in love with him.

To be in love was a chronic affection to which Miss Lydia was subject ; she was always in love ; or imagined herself in love, with some one ; a hero in a novel would captivate her fancy, *faute de mieux* ; but this great handsome Felix was a godsend to the romantic little lady.

She suspected from the very first she had made an impression on him, and the way in which he handed her her tea strengthened this idea, though, as a matter of fact, it was the most ordinary action, performed in the most ordinary way and quite devoid of all hidden meaning ; and when her imagination detected a lingering squeeze in the shake of his hand on leaving her cup of happiness was full.

If her conquest required any confirmation, it received it when Miss Keppel informed her of Amy's invitation to Sark, and added it emanated from Felix.

"I knew it," exclaimed Miss Lydia, her maiden cheeks suffused with crimson.

"You knew what ?" said Miss Keppel.

"Oh ! oh ! nothing, Sophy," giggled Miss Lydia in a very self-conscious manner. "I think, Sophy, if you have no objection, I should like to go to St. Helier's and get a new hat to-morrow," she added presently, thinking the excursion to Sark demanded this addition to her wardrobe.

Miss Keppel consented, and for once allowed Miss Lydia to go

shopping alone, a privilege that little lady somewhat abused by buying a hat suitable to a girl of eighteen, in which she looked ridiculously juvenile, but which she felt confident would complete the conquest already begun of Felix Oxburgh's heart.

On the afternoon of the day preceding the one fixed for the excursion, Miss Lydia was taking advantage of Miss Keppel's absence to try on her new hat for at least the twentieth time since its arrival, when Mr. Oxburgh called, and she hurried down with beating heart, leaving the hat on her bed, to receive him.

Felix had called to tell them to be at Grève de Lecq, the nearest point to Sark, at ten o'clock the next morning, but Miss Lydia chose to imagine the visit was an excuse to see her.

"I am looking forward to a delightful day," said Felix, who was thinking of Rose and Green, whose meeting was to be a surprise to both.

"So am I," said Miss Lydia, modestly blushing.

"I hear Sark is a very romantic spot, and I expect a little romance will be enacted there to-morrow," said Felix, still thinking of Rose.

"He means to propose to-morrow. Oh, what a state I feel in! I—I almost wish Sophy would return; I am so nervous. It is so very awkward under the circumstances," thought Miss Lydia.

"I expect Sophy immediately," she remarked.

"Ah! We will keep that romance a secret till to-morrow, I think, Miss Lydia. I have not breathed it to Amy yet," said Felix.

"I am so glad you haven't," said Miss Lydia involuntarily, feeling sure Amy would do her best to laugh him out of the attachment she imagined he had formed for herself, if he confided in her.

Felix thought the remark rather odd, but paid no attention to it, and soon after took his leave with another handshake, into which Miss Lydia infused much meaning.

After he was gone Miss Lydia heard a great deal of scampering about on the landing overhead, which betokened the puppy was trespassing on forbidden ground. So she went upstairs to see what it was doing, and arrived in time to see the last destroying bite given to her new hat, now a hat no longer. All that remained of it was scraps of straw and ribbons and feathers scattered over the landing.

The cause of this mischief wagged its tail, and barked with delight at its performance, as Miss Lydia appeared on the scene; and when Miss Keppel returned half-an-hour later, Miss Lydia and a housemaid were breathless, having been in pursuit of the puppy ever since—one armed with a dog-whip, the other with a walking-stick; but the puppy was master of the field.

"Sophy," exclaimed Miss Lydia, who was ready to cry, "if that puppy remains in this house, I do not. It is beyond all bearing."

"What has he been doing now, the naughty dog?" asked Miss Keppel, as the dog threw itself on its back at her feet, deprecating the punishment its canine conscience suggested it merited.

"It has torn my new hat to atoms, the horrid, mischievous thing—I hate it," said Miss Lydia, on the verge of tears.

Miss Keppel had taken a great liking to this animal since Miss Dorcas's marriage, and was privately of opinion that the fault in the present instance was more Miss Lydia's than the dog's. She also secretly rejoiced that the hat she considered ridiculous no longer existed. However, she did violence to her own feelings and the puppy's by whipping it.

Miss Lydia, however, never forgave the dog, and to her dying day believed Felix would have proposed to her if she had only worn the hat the puppy destroyed. "On such slight things," she said, "do our destinies hang." They do; but it was not Miss Lydia's destiny which hung on the hat, although it was the indirect means of affecting the destiny of some one else.

"Where did you get the hat, Lydia?" said Miss Keppel.

"At Janvrin's. Do you think they would make me some allowance for it, Sophy? We are very good customers, and we introduced Amy, who must be one of their very best customers."

"They might; I'll go with you and see, if you like. The horse wants more exercise, and there is plenty of time before tea," said Miss Keppel.

Accordingly, the sisters drove into town, and Miss Keppel, who liked to make a fuss about small things, asked to see Madame Janvrin alone, and in the course of the interview learnt to her horror and surprise that Mrs. Lockwood owed the Janvrins over three hundred pounds, a piece of news Madame Janvrin was very glad to have the opportunity of communicating

under the strictest secrecy to Miss Keppel, who, having introduced her niece, felt to a certain extent responsible.

"I am sure they must be living beyond their income. I will sound Amy on the subject to-morrow, but I am half afraid Jack knows nothing of these debts," said Miss Keppel to her sister on her way home.

"Oh, Sophy, surely, surely Amy can't be so wicked as to have a secret from her husband! Fancy any woman being guilty of such a sin. Husbands and wives should be of one mind as well as of one flesh. If I were married I should share my every thought with my husband," said Miss Lydia, thinking how delightful it would be to share her every thought with Felix.

"You would bore him to death in a week, if you did," said Miss Keppel sharply.

"Oh, Sophy, you are only a woman. It requires a masculine mind to respond fully to a woman's inmost soul," said Miss Lydia.

"Inmost nonsense, Lydia! A man with any sense would laugh at you the first time you talked such trash to him, and swear at you the second; and if you ventured on a third trial, it would serve you right if he beat you," said Miss Keppel severely, venting the anger she inwardly felt against Mrs. Lockwood on poor Miss Lydia.

Miss Lydia sighed, and thought what bliss it would be to escape from her unsympathetic sister's society and spend the rest of her life with Felix Oxburgh's masculine mind responding to her inmost soul.

"What age is Mr. Oxburgh, Sophy?" she asked next.

"About five-and-twenty, I believe. Why?"

"Five-and-thirty you mean, Sophy. I am sure he must be at least that; he looks it fully, and he is the eldest of the family," said Miss Lydia, who was inwardly trying to make Felix as old as possible, so that by making herself young in an inverse proportion they might meet on equal, or nearly equal, terms of age.

"Well, Amy can tell you to a day. Ask her to-morrow," said Miss Keppel.

The next day was a delightful one for the time of year; but just at the last moment Jack Lockwood was prevented from going to Sark. So the party consisted of the Misses Keppel, Amy, Major Graham and Felix. Green went, ostensibly to

carry shawls and wraps—really, as Felix alone knew, to be reconciled to his wife ; but the man was in ignorance of the surprise in store for him, not having the least idea of Rose's hiding-place.

They reached Sark about twelve, just in time, Amy said, to look at some of the caves before luncheon. To Miss Lydia's annoyance Amy monopolized her handsome cousin all the morning, declaring she was too nervous, after her adventure with Jack, to venture into a cave except with Felix, who knew all about the tides.

On leaving the caves, however, Felix contrived to get by Miss Lydia's side, aided by that lady in this endeavour, and as they walked back to the hotel he unconsciously excited her secret hopes by referring to the romance he had spoken of the previous day.

"The time has almost arrived for the consummation of my romance," said Felix, as they walked across the Coupée, the narrow road which separates Great Sark from Little Sark.

"What beautiful language he uses to express his thoughts," was Miss Lydia's mental comment, as she coloured with expectant delight.

"I have been longing for this hour ever since I came to Jersey," pursued Felix.

"It must have been love at first sight, for he first saw me the day after his arrival," thought Miss Lydia.

"Have you really?" she simpered.

"Yes, I shall be the happiest man in Europe to-night," said Felix.

"And I the happiest woman," thought Miss Lydia, but fortunately she was too shy to say so.

"Are we going right?" she asked nervously, as Felix passed the turn to the hotel they were to lunch at.

"Yes, I am going to that cottage first, if it is not too far for you ; that is the scene of my romance," said Felix, pointing to a pretty thatched cottage in the dale a little below them.

"Oh no, it is not too far," said Miss Lydia hastily.

"I wonder if he is going to propose that we should live there," she thought.

"It is an ideal cottage, isn't it? See, there is a plantation close by, so the old song, 'In my cottage near a wood,' is most applicable."

"It is a charming spot, so romantic," said Miss Lydia.

"I knew you would think so; what do you say when I tell you my heroine lives there?"

Miss Lydia's hopes fell from blood-heat to zero at this startling announcement; had he actually been so cruel as to bring her so far to show her her rival? He could not surely be guilty of such perfidy; he must mean his heroine would live there, or perhaps he was speaking in poetry and meant she lived there in imagination.

"She does not actually live there, does she?" she asked.

"Well, no, perhaps not," said Felix.

Miss Lydia's hopes rose again to summer-heat.

"Ah! here comes my hero," said Felix, as Green approached the cottage from the opposite direction, being under orders to meet Felix there with a parcel at this time.

Miss Lydia's hopes once more sank to freezing point.

"Where?" she asked.

"There! Don't you see Green? He has lost his wife for two years, and she is in that cottage and he does not know it. I am going to send him up to it with a message, and she will open the door to him. Just fancy what his delight will be. We must not go any nearer, but I could not resist coming so far. All right, Green; that is the cottage," cried Felix, raising his voice, as Green touched his hat and, opening the wicket gate, went up the neat garden-path to the porch.

A minute later the door opened, there was a suppressed cry of surprise and delight from Green, and a young pretty woman threw herself into his arms, and Felix turned away to look at the view of the Dixcart valley, and Miss Lydia thought there were tears in his eyes.

As for Green, he and Rose were sobbing in each other's arms, and vowing that nothing but death should ever separate them again.

"I must go and speak to them when they have recovered a little; I'll overtake you and tell you the rest of their story; it is rather chilly for you standing here," said Felix, and poor Miss Lydia was so downcast and disappointed that she was glad to take the hint and be alone for a few minutes.

"Well, Rose, are you glad to see your husband again?" said Felix a few minutes later as he joined Rose and Green in the porch.

"Oh, yes! Mr. Felix; I can never thank you and Mr. Selsey enough, sir."

"We neither of us can; you have been the making of me, sir. I should have given up again and again if it had not been for you and the hope of seeing Rose again, but I knew you would keep your word, Mr. Felix, and that helped me to keep mine. I'll never part from Rose again, sir; no, not for a night. What's to be done, sir? how are we to manage?"

"I must ask Mrs. Lockwood; perhaps she might take you as nurse, Rose; I know she wants a nurse, and I know also neither she nor Mr. Lockwood wish to part with Green. Don't come up to the hotel till you hear from me, Green; I'll undertake to make it right with your mistress," said Felix as he left to overtake Miss Lydia.

It was finally arranged that Rose should return to Jersey with them that day, and stay with the Lockwoods as a visitor until the present nurse left, and then she was to take her place and go to England with them.

In spite of Felix's delight neither Miss Keppel nor Miss Lydia thought the day had been successful; Miss Keppel had had no opportunity of speaking to Amy about Janvrin's bill, and was sure Amy purposely avoided a *tête-à-tête* with her, so she went home depressed and worried.

Miss Lydia, having been once more the victim of blighted hopes and what she called the perfidy of man, returned in a most dejected state, and in reply to her sister's inquiries as to the cause of her low spirits, gave vent to the trite old saying, "Men were deceivers ever;" more than this Miss Keppel could not get out of her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GREAT WAS THE FALL THEREOF.

THE expedition to Sark took place on a Wednesday; Felix had intended to leave the next day, but was persuaded to stay till the following Monday and cross with the Lockwoods. As the day for leaving approached Amy grew more and more anxious about her debts; she felt almost sure the tradespeople would not let her leave the island unless she paid their bills, and this she could not possibly do.

The news must therefore come to Jack's ears, unless Felix

could help her; even if he could not she would rather he was with her when her husband learnt how extravagant she had been; so she persuaded her cousin to remain.

On the Saturday after the Sark excursion, Amy got up with a very heavy heart; she must do her best that day to appease the tradespeople; perhaps by dint of small sums on account and large promises of future payment she could keep them quiet; and there still remained the hope that they had not heard she was leaving on Monday, but this was rather a forlorn hope, as the news was probably known through the servants.

"I must see how much I can get out of Jack; I might manage with a hundred pounds, but if I get fifty from Jack I shall do well; perhaps Felix can lend me the other fifty," thought Mrs. Lockwood as she went to Jack's smoking-room to ask for a cheque after breakfast.

"How much do you want?" said Jack, who was in a great bustle, as he pulled out his cheque book.

"Oh, as much as you can possibly spare me. I have several bills to pay," said Amy.

"I can let you have forty pounds; that will leave us a balance of ten pounds for our travelling expenses till pay-day. Shall I make it payable to you?"

"No; I hate going to the bank; the clerks stare so. Make it payable to bearer, and I'll get Felix to cash it," said Amy.

Jack did so, handed his wife the cheque, and thought no more of the matter.

"Forty pounds. Why, four hundred would only just clear me," thought Amy, as she went to look for Felix to ask him to go to town with her. "I am going to pay bills," said Amy.

"Ah, I am glad to say I have no bills just now, but I have barely enough money to last me till my dividend comes in," said Felix casually, and Amy knew this last resource of borrowing from him was useless.

What was she to do?

Forty pounds would not satisfy Janvrin alone, and she had at least six other importunate creditors.

Forty pounds! and Jack said he had only another ten pounds in the bank. Surely he had made a mistake; he must have more, and if he had he must give her more. She must confess

to a fourth of Janvrin's bill ; that would be better than letting Janvrin apprise him of the whole.

Jack would never forgive her if he found out—she owed so much money ; he had such a horror of debt.

"I will get his pass-book and just see what money he has ; he is very careless ; I daresay he does not know," she said to herself as she waited for the pony-carriage to come round.

She went into Jack's room, and opening a drawer in his writing-table found his pass-book lying there. She opened the book, and to her amazement found he had paid in the sum of four hundred pounds on the day she was at Sark.

She could hardly believe the evidence of her own eyes. Jack had told her, when she drew the forty pounds, it would leave a balance of ten pounds, instead of which he had four hundred and ten pounds still in the bank.

What could it mean ?

He could not possibly have made a mistake, neither could he have forgotten that he had paid in so large a sum ; for it was the largest amount he had ever paid in at one time.

Evidently he had meant to keep this money a secret from her. He did not choose her to know he possessed it. Possibly he wanted it for purposes of his own. Perhaps he, too, was in debt.

Where did he get this money from ?

From his mother, no doubt. He had a letter from her the day Amy was at Sark. Possibly it contained a cheque, but where old Mrs. Lockwood had got the money from Amy did not pause to inquire. All she knew was that her mother-in-law was not in a position either to give or lend her son so large a sum.

"Four hundred pounds, and then only to spare me a paltry forty," said Amy, as she slowly unfolded the cheque her husband had given her.

As she did so she noticed that in his haste Mr. Lockwood had forgotten to write the sum the cheque was drawn out for ; he had put forty pounds in figures at the bottom of the cheque, but the line on which he ought to have written the sum was blank.

And then the devil entered into Amy, and as he never comes empty-handed, he brought with him an idea, and the idea was to alter the cheque from forty to four hundred pounds.

"I could do it with a stroke of the pen—a nought after forty, and then write four hundred pounds in Jack's handwriting in the blank line. I have a great mind to do it. It would solve all my difficulties; and I really must have the money. We shall not be able to leave the island on Monday if I don't; we shall have half the tradespeople on the pier stopping us; and what a disgrace that will be if it gets known. I don't see any help for it. I must do it, and trust to Uncle John to lend me the money to repay it as soon as I get to England. Jack will know nothing about it; he never looks at his pass-book."

So thinking, Amy dipped a pen into some ink, and was about to alter the cheque when some one tapped at the door, and without waiting for an answer Felix walked in.

"Are you ready, Amy? The pony is at the door."

"I shall be in one moment. I am just looking out the bills I have to pay. Jump in and drive up and down till I come, Felix, will you? The pony won't stand. I shan't be five minutes," said Amy, feeling very guilty, although she was in fact still innocent.

"All right," said Felix, leaving her alone, and as the door closed Amy once more dipped the pen into the ink.

This time she did not hesitate; she was afraid of a second interruption, and, having carefully added a cipher to the forty pounds, she wrote four hundred pounds in the blank space in her husband's writing, finishing the line with a flourish, such as he always used.

"Splendid; it is exactly like Jack's writing, flourish and all," said Mrs. Lockwood, surveying her work with satisfaction. "Oh, what a weight it will be off my mind to pay all those wretched bills, and to give old Janvrin a set-down for his impertinence. Won't I ride over him this morning, the mercenary old wretch," she thought as she dried the cheque by shaking it to and fro, not on the blotting-paper, lest that should tell tales, and then she put it in her purse, gathered up her bills, put on her gloves, and went out to join her cousin.

She was in high spirits as they drove to the bank, and laughed and talked in her gayest manner. All she thought of was the delight of being relieved from her present difficulties. She told herself it was a providential dispensation that she had happened to look into her husband's banking book.

No qualms of conscience, no fear of detection, no dread of consequences at present troubled her. She could pay her bills without Jack knowing she had contracted any debts; that was all she thought of.

"We must go to the bank first, Felix; and I want you to go in and cash the cheque for me. I can't bear running the gauntlet of half-a-dozen bank clerks," said Mrs. Lockwood, as she stopped her pony at the door of the bank.

"All right," said Felix, taking the cheque, as Green jumped off the back-seat and went to the pony's head.

Felix unfolded the cheque as he went up the steps into the bank, but he paused at the door, and started when he saw the amount it was for, and returned to Amy.

"Amy, this is a very large cheque; I think you had better come in with me. They may hesitate to give so large a sum to a stranger," he said.

"Oh, no, they won't; it is payable to bearer; besides you can tell them I am at the door if they do," said Mrs. Lockwood, who had her own reasons for wishing Felix to cash the cheque.

To the relief of Felix, the clerk seemed to think it was quite natural he, a stranger, should present so large a cheque, and when he remarked it was for his cousin, Mrs. Lockwood, who was at the door, the clerk replied:

"It is quite right, sir. Mr. Lockwood told me he should withdraw this sum very shortly,"

"It is a large sum for them to owe; it is more than two-thirds of their income," thought Felix, as he rejoined Amy with a packet of bank notes in his hand.

The next hour was spent in driving about paying bills, and by the time this was accomplished there was very little change out of the four hundred pounds, but Mrs. Lockwood had the satisfaction of being out of debt, and of having been as haughty and insolent as possible to Mr. and Madame Janvrin.

"Now, Felix, I think we will send the carriage home and go to the market; I want some flowers," said Amy.

In the market they met several acquaintances, all of whom were full of regret that the Lockwoods were going to England a few days before the ball at Government House, and of hope that they would be back in time for a large fancy ball to be given at Easter.

"Oh, yes, we shall be back long before then," said Amy confidently, little thinking she was destined never to spend another Saturday morning in the Jersey market or grace another Jersey ball with her presence.

As they were leaving the market, they met Miss Keppel, who looked very grave at first, but as Amy gave an account of her morning's work, her gravity changed to surprise, which she found it difficult to conceal.

"We have been paying bills all the morning, Aunt Sophy, and now I owe no man anything, and a most delightful sensation it is; it took all our money, though; Jack says he has only a balance of ten pounds till pay-day," said Mrs. Lockwood.

"They must be very much better off than I had any idea of if she has paid Janvrin," thought Miss Keppel, and when she had left her niece, her curiosity to know if Janvrin was really paid prompted her to go into the shop on pretence of looking at Miss Lydia's new hat.

Her curiosity was speedily gratified, Madame Janvrin was all bows and smiles, full of thanks to Miss Keppel for having introduced so good a customer as Mrs. Lockwood, and equally full of the most fulsome praise of that lady's beauty and charming manners, although Amy's manner to Madame Janvrin had purposely been as disagreeable as possible that morning.

For the rest of that day Mrs. Lockwood remained in high spirits; the bank closed at one on Saturday and did not open again till ten o'clock on Monday morning, by which time they would be well on their way to England, so there was no chance of her husband discovering her crime before they left Jersey.

Once in England she thought she could manage to borrow the money and repay it before Jack discovered she had drawn it; and if things came to the worst she must go to a money-lender and pay the interest out of her quarterly allowance.

For once in her life Amy did not sleep well that night; a guilty conscience is a very hard pillow, and she tossed and turned till day-break. In the night-watches she began to realize that she had committed not only a sin—that perhaps would not have kept her awake—but a crime, a crime punishable by law, by penal servitude, as she now for the first time remembered.

The very thought of such a thing threw her almost into a fever, but then she reflected Jack would never prosecute her; he

would hush the matter up for his own sake if not for hers, if he ever discovered it.

Oh! but he must not discover it; he must never, never know it; she could never face him again if he did; she would do anything rather than let it come to his knowledge; she would run away from him and hide herself first; nay, she would die first.

Death was horrible, but less horrible than disgrace.

Death was terrible, but less terrible than Jack's righteous anger.

Death was bitter, but sweeter death than to forfeit all hope of winning her husband's love.

Yes, yes, yes; death, a thousand deaths, rather than let her husband know she had forged his writing and robbed him. Fool that she had been; why, her extravagance was a venial sin in comparison with the crime she had just committed.

What should she do?

Should she wake Jack and confess her crime and trust to his mercy?

No, no, no; she dared not do that; he would scorn her; she could not face his scorn; she would die first; again and again during the night she told herself she would die first.

Then another idea occurred to her; she would deny the charge if she were discovered; she would shift the guilt on to Felix; he had cashed the cheque; she would declare she had received but forty pounds, and she would alter the receipts she had taken that day to prove her story.

Poor Felix! She was so fond of him too, but she was fonder of herself; she must sacrifice him to save herself if need be.

But with the daylight, when she woke, after a few hours' sleep, came other thoughts; she had been nervous and excited in the night and had over-estimated her danger, there was really no danger of detection. All she had to do was to borrow four hundred pounds in England as quickly as possible and pay it in to her husband's account.

She had committed no crime; she had only borrowed of her husband, and there was no sin in a wife borrowing of her husband; the strictest moralist could not object to that. True she had imitated his handwriting, but under the circumstances there was no sin in that; it was to save him trouble; he had forgotten to fill in the cheque, and there was not time to drive up to the Fort

for him to rectify the omission ; the fault, if fault there was, was Jack's.

How nervous she had been during the night. She must take a composing draught to-night or she would not be fit for the journey on Monday ; and so she did, for in spite of all her plausible arguments she was very restless and uneasy the whole day. Even Jack and Felix noticed it, but she ascribed it to her excitement at the prospect of going to England after two years' absence.

Monday morning dawned at last, and by half-past six o'clock, before daylight, they were on board the boat, and Amy breathed freely. As they steamed out of the harbour she felt as if she were leaving her crime behind her, like some horrible incubus of which she was free ; the fresh sea-breeze seemed to cool her excited brain, and as Jersey disappeared gradually from view, till at last not even the loom of the land was visible, so did the fear of discovery that was haunting her grow less and less, until by the time they reached Southampton she had forgotten all about it for the time.

They stayed that night in London, and the next day she and Jack went down to Oxburgh, leaving Felix under a promise to follow them in the course of a few days. Green and Rose, little Gladys, the baby and an under-nurse went with them, and somewhat to Amy's relief Jack insisted on taking Gladys in the same carriage with them ; as a rule she would have resented this, but on this occasion it averted a *tête-à-tête* and left her to pursue her own thoughts.

Joy was the centre of her thoughts during the journey. Was she in love with Major Graham ?

Had she forgotten Jack ?

Had Jack forgotten her ?

How would they meet ?

If she could be sure they were nothing to each other, she might hope eventually to win her husband's whole heart, and this was now the treasure Amy longed for above everything.

No triumph would be so great as this ; to supplant Joy as completely in his affections as she had supplanted her in their external relations ; to triumph inwardly as she had triumphed outwardly. She coveted Jack's love, for she was gradually waking to the consciousness that that alone could make life worth living. Jealousy is a sign of love, and she was jealous even of his love for

his baby-girl. If she saw a sign of lingering tenderness for Joy, her jealousy would be roused to a dangerous extent. She was not a woman to brook a slight nor to be scorned lightly, nor was she even yet aware of the strength of the passion now budding forth in her soul; but as they drew near to Oxburgh the thought of Joy drove all thought of her crime from her mind.

But little she thought detection was near at hand, but the Nemesis of evil sometimes travels apace.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OXBURGH HALL AGAIN.

JOY was altered; she had grown from a girl to a woman, in the two years and a half since her cousin Amy had seen her.

"Joy is aged," thought Mrs. Lockwood, but that was merely a feminine way of putting the fact that Joy had matured.

Of all the passions love has the greatest power of maturing character, and disappointed love acts quicker than any other phase of love.

"Joy is aged," was therefore Mrs. Lockwood's first mental comment on her cousin.

"Joy is unhappy," was her second.

This second criticism was no more true than the first had been, it was an exaggeration; Joy was not unhappy, she was simply not happy; it was a negative rather than a positive state. She was not happy because she was unsatisfied.

In accepting Major Graham, she had hoped that in time at any rate she could give him the wealth of love with which nature had endowed her; but as the days went on that time, instead of coming nearer, seemed to grow farther off, and the thought of her marriage was like a nightmare.

However, as that event was indefinitely postponed, she did not often think of it, but now that the first novelty of her engagement had worn off, it brought her no happiness, and Joy looked as she felt, indifferent and apathetic.

What her feelings for Jack Lockwood were, Amy, though she watched her narrowly the first few days they were together, could not tell; their manner to each other was simply that of friends, and the point of union between them was little Gladys, to whom Joy had taken a great fancy, much to the annoyance of The Captain, whose jealousy was aroused.

Sometimes The Captain condescended to join in the game of wolf, which went on in the billiard-room, where Jack Lockwood as wolf had his den under the billiard table, and crawled out on all fours after Joy with the delighted Gladys in her arms ; sometimes the dog sat and looked on with a sulky air of superior wisdom very refreshing to witness.

" I wonder you are not jealous of Joy, Amy," said the squire one morning a few days after their arrival, as he and she looked into the billiard-room to see the cause of the shouts of laughter which came from it.

" Why, Uncle John ? " said Amy, who would have been intensely jealous of Joy could she have found the slightest basis for such jealousy.

" Because Gladys seems so happy with her," said the squire.

" Oh ! Gladys is Jack's child entirely ; she never cared for me ; the boy is my delight," said Amy, relieved to find her uncle was alluding to the child and not to her husband.

" It is lucky for Rose Gladys is so good with Joy ; it gives her time to go and talk to poor old Perriam ; he looks years younger since she came back," said the squire, with whom the gardener's pretty daughter had always been a favourite.

" I hope he won't want Green and Rose to settle down here, for I think she will make an excellent nurse and we have never been so comfortable as we have since Green came to us," said Amy, as she and the squire crossed the hall on their way to the garden, whither they were bent. In the hall, however, they met Green with a telegram in his hand for his master.

Now telegrams were to the squire as a bone is to a dog. They amused him ; they excited him ; he delighted in them ; he could not rest until he had devoured their contents ; and as for going out for a walk without knowing if that telegram concerned him in the remotest degree, why, it was not to be thought of.

" A telegram for Mr. Lockwood. Here, give it to me, Green ; he is in the billiard-room. Amy, my dear, we had better go and see if it is important ; I hope it contains no bad news," said the squire, bustling back to the billiard-room.

" Oh no, Uncle John, it is only from the colonel, I expect ; he is so fussy, he will worry Jack's life out even on his leave," said Amy indifferently, but in her heart of hearts she was afraid lest the telegram contained bad news.

"We will go and see," said the squire, returning to the billiard-room, whither Amy's uneasy conscience induced her to follow.

"Lockwood, here is a telegram for you," said the squire.

The "wolf," who was on all fours pursuing Joy and Gladys, assumed an upright position at hearing this, and as he opened the yellow envelope, remarked as Amy had done:

"It is only from my colonel, probably."

But the next moment his careless manner changed to one of the greatest anxiety; the smile faded from his eyes; he knit his brows in perplexity, and turning very pale, muttered between his teeth:

"Impossible! There must be some mistake."

"Is there anything wrong?" said the squire, who was dying of curiosity to see the telegram.

"I—I don't know; it must be a mistake; I can't understand it unless—unless—but that is impossible too," gasped Jack, staring at the telegram and trying to read another meaning into the words.

"Whom is it from?" said Amy, dreading the answer.

"From Stanley Hyde," said Jack.

"Mr. Hyde, what can he have to telegraph to you about?" exclaimed Amy, a new fear taking possession of her.

"Only a matter of four hundred pounds," said Jack ironically, still puzzling over the message.

Amy felt her knees sink under her; she dropped on to a chair under pretence of intercepting Gladys, who was toddling from Joy to her father to implore him to resume the rôle of the wolf, while necessity made him play the part of the fleeced sheep.

"Is it bad news?" said the squire with itching ears.

"It would be ruin if it were true; but it can't be true; it is impossible; there is some mistake. I sent Hyde a cheque the other day, and he wires to say I have overdrawn; it is dishonoured and he can't cash it," said Mr. Lockwood.

"Is it possible you have overdrawn? Do you remember how much it was for?" said the squire.

"I should think I did. The cheque was for four hundred pounds; I only paid it in ten days or so ago," replied Jack.

A cry from Gladys, whom her mother was trying to entice on to her lap, interrupted the conversation, and seeing the child worried her father, Joy went forward and took her out of the room.

"Do you mean you drew out Mr. Hyde's cheque for four hundred pounds?" said the squire.

"Why, Jack, you told me you had only fifty pounds in the bank a day or two before we left Jersey," interrupted Amy, forcing herself to speak, though she felt ready to faint with fright.

"I had only fifty pounds of my own and I gave you a cheque for forty. The four hundred was Mr. Hyde's money; he won it at the club and asked me to pay it in to my account for a few days because he was going over to Paris and had not time to go home first with it. I did not want to do it, but I didn't like to appear disobliging, so I consented. What am I to do, Mr. Oxburgh? I must go over to Jersey to-night," said Jack.

"Telegraph to the bank to stop payment of all cheques, and to ask what your balance is, telling them to reply immediately," suggested the squire.

To Amy's intense relief, the squire and her husband left the billiard-room to send off this telegram, without noticing the effect the news had upon her; for on hearing the money was Mr. Hyde's her heart seemed to leap into her mouth; she felt her colour leave her, and it was only by an intense effort she prevented herself from fainting dead away, and so betraying her guilt.

She staggered to a window when she found herself alone, opened it, and gasped for breath. Her first thought when she could think clearly was that she had fallen into a trap deliberately set for her or Jack by Mr. Hyde. He had known of her debts, had guessed their inability to pay them and had purposely asked Jack to take care of this money, hoping he or she would be tempted to draw upon it to enable them to leave the island. And she had abetted him in his diabolical design of ruining Jack out of pique; for that he would spare Jack she knew was a wild hope: he would be only too eager to denounce him as a swindler.

As Jack said, it meant ruin if it were true, and, as she knew, it was only too true.

Jack would have to leave the army after this; no one would believe his story that he had given her a cheque for forty pounds, when a cheque for four hundred in his handwriting had been presented the same day by her cousin, unless indeed suspicion could be shifted on to Felix.

At first she seemed paralyzed, but she soon rallied, and strained every nerve to act so as to avert suspicion from herself.

The first thing to be done was to prevent Felix, who was expected the following day, from coming to Oxburgh; the next to get him if possible to Jersey, so that if suspicion fell on him he could be on the spot, and to these ends she went to her own room and wrote to Felix, telling him that Jack, who was in great trouble, was obliged to go over to Jersey that night, and imploring him to cross the next day and do what he could to help him. She added that it was a most serious matter, and unless properly managed meant ruin for Jack, and she had little doubt that Felix, who spent his time in going about the doing good to others, would make it his first care to go and help his recent host in his trouble, though he did not know what it was. She had just finished this letter when Joy came to her room with the news that the reply to Jack's telegram had just arrived.

"Do you know what it is?" asked Amy, whose excited state was not lost upon Joy, though she attributed it at first to natural sympathy with her husband.

"Yes, it said the balance in the bank is only fifty pounds, so he has been robbed of three hundred and sixty pounds. But come down, Amy; he is getting an early lunch before he starts; he has to leave by the two o'clock express or he won't catch the boat," said Joy. Amy rose and followed her cousin to the dining-room, where Jack and the squire were discussing the matter as they ate their luncheon.

"Who cashed that cheque for you on Saturday morning, Amy?" asked Jack as she entered.

"Felix," said Amy.

"Ah! that is all right; I thought so. Now the question is, was the rest of the money drawn before or after that and by whom?" said Jack.

"And that you can't learn till you get to Jersey; if it weren't for the passage I would come with you and help you to run down the scoundrel," said the squire, who was never so happy as when chasing something, foxes or hares or otters; so the prospect of pursuing such big game as a scoundrel was delightful.

"Brave the passage and come, sir; it would be the greatest comfort to me, for it is a most serious matter, as you will acknowledge when I tell you the kind of man Hyde is," said Felix.

"Upon my word, I think I will. Joy, run up and pack a port-manteau for me while I go and tell your mother I am going," said the squire, unable to resist the man-hunt he promised himself.

Mrs. Oxburgh was not willing to let her husband go at first; she was nervous about the passage, and it was such cold weather for him to travel; she was nervous, too, at night when he was out, and she did not see the need for his undertaking so long a journey, but when she heard Jack wished to have the squire with him, as it was a matter of such vast importance to him, she consented, and the squire went.

He promised to send a telegram to announce their safe arrival on landing, and, as soon as the matter was satisfactorily arranged, to return.

The remainder of the day Amy endured torture; she had an idea that Joy was watching her, and her guilty conscience suggested that she suspected her; she was inwardly following the squire and Jack on their way to Jersey, and the nearer they drew in her imagination to St. Helier's the greater grew her fear. Perhaps they would call on Felix in London and learn from him that the cheque he cashed for her was for four hundred pounds instead of for forty; in this case they would know of her guilt that evening. Oh! horror!

But later on she dismissed this fear, after consulting "Bradshaw," and finding they would not have time to stop in London, but would barely catch the Jersey mail. At the earliest they could not even suspect her till the next morning, when they reached the bank, and then they might as reasonably suspect Felix as her. By dint of a great deal of acting—and Mrs. Lockwood was nothing if not an actress—she managed to maintain an outward demeanour exactly suited to the occasion; a slight restlessness touched with anxiety and regret that Jack should be so worried during his holiday characterized her manner.

But on reaching her room that night, she threw off the mask she had been wearing with the rest of her clothes, and locking herself in, gave way to the despair she felt.

She threw herself on the rug in front of the blazing fire, and clenching her hands, dug them into the bearskin, beating on the ground with her little feet as she writhed in agony. Who that knew her would have believed her capable of so much feeling?

Was this the calm, dignified, beautiful Mrs. Lockwood, the belle of all the balls?

Was this the graceful, charming, self-possessed woman, never seen in *deshabille*, actual or moral?

Yes; there she lay in her dressing-gown, her pretty hair streaming in disorder down her back, her little shoeless feet kicking against the pricks, her beautiful face hidden in the white fur of the hearthrug, as she moaned in her agony. She could have screamed aloud, but it would have betrayed her; so only stifled moans escaped her as she lay prone to the earth.

If it had not been for Joy, she thought, she could have borne it. She had come to Oxburgh, hoping to show Joy her husband loved her; she had come primarily to triumph over Joy. And now, as soon as her sin was known, Joy would scorn her; her aunt, her uncle—nay, the very servants would scorn her as a thief, a forger! worse than all, Jack, who had always respected and admired her—Jack, to gain whose love she felt she would make any sacrifice, now that her soul had awakened and she found she loved him—he would scorn her.

Never! Never! Never!

Death—death—a thousand deaths rather than live to be scorned by him!

She tortured herself by imagining how he would look when he heard she, his wife, had robbed him—had been guilty of forgery—had rendered herself liable to be arrested, prosecuted, tried, judged, sentenced, imprisoned, transported—touched, perhaps roughly, by common men and women, by policemen, by prison warders!

Live through that?

Never! Never! Never!

If he could survive such disgrace and degradation, she could not; she would not; she would die first.

She shrank from all physical pain. If she had a slight headache all the household was convulsed to minister to it; but rather any physical pain than such mental suffering as this.

Oh, fool! fool! fool that she had been to commit such a crime! And for what? To hide for a week the knowledge of her debts from her husband. To hide a fault she had committed a crime; to avoid Scylla she had wrecked herself on Charybdis; to avoid wetting her feet, she had jumped into the river; to escape mos-

quitoes she had run into the lion's den ; rather than scorch her face she had thrown herself into the fire.

What consummate folly !

And to aggravate her folly, here she was lying on her face, doing absolutely nothing to help herself.

She sprang up, shook out her hair, clasped her hands to her head, and thought intensely for a few moments.

What could she do ?

Nothing, absolutely nothing but await events.

Wait till Jack knew of her guilt ; wait till he was on his way back to Oxburgh ; wait till he was nearly there, and then—and then—and then—she knew what she would do.

There were plenty of things she might have done, had she not been almost paralyzed with fear, when she heard the news. She might have prevented the squire going to Jersey ; she might have hindered Jack from telling any one what had happened ; she might have borrowed the money and repaid it before her husband reached Jersey. But she had done none of these things ; all she had done had been to write to Felix, and that, on second thoughts, she had better have left undone.

He would only confirm her guilt, and the squire and Jack would never for one moment think of doubting his word. Felix certainly would do her more harm than good. The only thing he could perhaps do might be to raise the money to repay Mr. Hyde, and so prevent a public scandal.

And if he could, he would ; of that she was sure. But that would not make her position one whit more bearable. It was her husband's anger and scorn she dreaded. She did not care one atom, comparatively speaking, for the rest of the world. She did not seriously think they would allow her to be prosecuted ; they would hush the matter up for the family's sake, for Jack's, for hers.

It was not the vulgar consequences of her crime she feared ; it was the far more refined torture of meeting the husband she had learnt to love and had wronged so deeply.

But she would not meet him ; he should never see her again ; they had looked upon each other for the last time. This she told herself again and again that night, as she paced the room, or lay on the rug, or sat gazing into the fire, which she kept up all night.

Towards morning she took a sleeping draught and got into bed. She must have some sleep, or her haggard looks the next morning would betray her ; for she was not a woman to pass a sleepless night for any slight cause, and Joy's great eyes would, she knew, scan her closely.

She slept late, and it was nearly twelve o'clock before she appeared downstairs, having had her breakfast in her room.

"There is no telegram yet, Amy, dear. I feel very anxious. I ought to have had one some time ago. The boat gets in by ten always, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Oxburgh, when Amy went to see her.

"Not always, Aunt Mary. There may have been a fog or a gale to delay it," said Amy, who felt respite.

Jack was perhaps still ignorant of her guilt ; but as the day wore on and no telegram came, Mrs. Oxburgh grew so nervous and fidgety that, to calm her, Joy telegraphed to the Southampton Packet Office to ask if anything had happened to the Jersey boat.

The answer came as she and Amy were going in to dinner :

"Dense fog in Channel. Jersey boat last seen off Needles."

Perhaps the boat had gone down ! Perhaps Jack was drowned ! Perhaps he was lying cold and stiff, a prey to fishes, at the bottom of the Channel, and would never know of her guilt !

Did she hope it ? Was the wish father to the thought ?

She hardly knew. At any rate, it was a respite, and she felt like a condemned man when there is some hitch in the preparations for death.

The evening passed away, and no telegram came ; and they all went to bed doubtful if the master of the house and his guest were safe or not. Had Amy lain awake that night every excuse would have been made for her, for her sleeplessness would have been attributed to anxiety for her husband ; but she did not. Worn out with all she had suffered the previous night, and buoyed up with the hope, perhaps after all Jack would never know of her guilt, she slept like a top.

She was awakened the next morning by Joy, who rushed into her room exclaiming :

"It is all right, Amy. Mother has just had a telegram. The boat got in at half-past ten last night, too late to telegraph."

"Too late to go to the bank. He does not know it yet" thought Amy, as she got up and began her toilette, and wondered what that terrible day would bring forth.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS LYDIA'S RELAPSE.

THERE are some people in this world peculiarly susceptible to zymotic diseases ; they are always catching some complaint ; they will tell you they have had measles four or five times ; whooping-cough three or four ; small-pox twice ; German measles, scarlet fever and chicken-pox at least once in the course of their lives.

There are other people a prey to imaginary diseases ; hypochondriacs these ; they live in a chronic state of suffering, of suffering which is real, though the disease is imaginary.

There are others who are constant victims to a certain disease which, whether it be real or imaginary, would puzzle doctors to say, for this disease is Love. Miss Lydia Keppel was peculiarly susceptible to this complaint ; from her youth up she had had an attack every year as regularly as the spring came round ; and now, though her youth was past, her age uncertain, her nature remained the same, and she was a constant sufferer from attacks of love.

The attack Felix Oxburgh had so unconsciously excited was a sharp one. On returning from Sark she had retired to her own room, and had remained there for a few days under plea of a bilious attack, removing her stays and solacing herself with Byron.

It was naughty to read Byron, Miss Lydia thought, and the vicar would reprove her for it when she paid her next private visit to the vestry, but it soothed her wounded heart as no other book would have done. So there she sat, limp and stayless in her dressing-gown, letting her mind disport itself unrestrained by conventional proprieties among the cantos of Childe Harold.

On the fourth day, which happened to be the day Felix left the island, she resumed her stays and her dress, and discarded Byron in favour of Adelaide Proctor and a poem called "Ezekiel," and went downstairs to rejoin her sister. Her romance was now touched with religion.

She found Miss Keppel very much exercised as to how Amy could possibly have paid Janvrin's bill before leaving the island. The good lady could talk of little else, though Miss Lydia could not even pretend to take the slightest interest in so very ordinary a matter. All she cared to know was that Felix had left Jersey; actually left without saying a word more to her; after having gone so far, so very far, as he had done—he had gone farther, even to England. And then Miss Lydia indulged some very profound reflections on the cruelty of men in general, and of Felix in particular, and wondered why she had been so peculiarly unfortunate in all her relations with the sex.

By degrees she rallied from this last attack, and at the end of ten days' day-dreaming, paid one of her periodical visits to the vicar, which seemed to afford her much support and consolation, though for the next few days she was seen to nod constantly and occasionally to drop a tear over the pages of "*Butler's Analogy*," which learned and logical work in its ponderous prose was suggested by Mr. Jimpson as a penitential antidote to Byron's poetry.

Then there came a day when all this was changed again; a day on which Miss Lydia went to town and met in the flesh Felix Oxburgh. She would not have trusted the evidence of one sense only, but she had the extreme felicity of shaking hands with him and hearing his voice once more.

So when eyes, ears and hands all combined to substantiate the fact that he was once again in Jersey, she could no longer doubt it, incredible as it at first seemed; the evidence of three senses could not be doubted.

Second thoughts, however, made everything clear. It was evident he had come back because he could stay away no longer. She was the magnet which had drawn him across the Channel again. No doubt he went to England, like the honourable man he was, to ask his father's consent to their marriage.

To be sure he did. Didn't he tell her his father was in Jersey, and he hoped to bring him out to Saumarez that day to see Miss Keppel? There was scarcely a doubt as to what Mr. Oxburgh's business with Sophy could be; it must be to discuss the marriage.

How cruelly she had misjudged Felix! How foolish she had been to doubt him! How impatient! How undisciplined still!

What would Sophy say? Poor Sophy, it would be very lonely

for her when both "her girls" were married ; but young people will be young people, and Miss Lydia, though no longer young as ordinary people count time, was so young in heart, she told herself, that she blushed and hastened home with a light springy step like a girl of seventeen.

How the whole world had changed for her in the course of that morning walk. She had set out with dull despair at her heart, no object in view, no object in life ; she returned with glad hope in her heart, marriage in view, and to live for Felix Oxburgh as her object in life.

Oh, happy, happy change ! Oh, beautiful Felix ! Oh, fortunate Lydia !

"I, Lydia, take thee, Felix ;" how well it would sound first intoned in Mr. Jimpson's deep voice and then faltered in her weak trembling tones.

"Felix Oxburgh, M.A., to Lydia, youngest daughter of the late John Keppel, Esq., J.P."

How well it would look in print.

What should she wear ? Would white satin and orange-blossom be too girlish ?

Sophy would say so, she thought with a sigh, and after all white is very trying to the complexion when the first flush of youth is over ; dove-coloured plush smothered with old lace would be more becoming.

Dear me, dear me ! there was no time to lose. She must be thinking about her trousseau ; she must set about it at once. She would make a list of things that very day. It would be a nice occupation till Felix arrived.

Dove-coloured plush and white lace yellow with age. Yes ; she should decide on that ; there was something poetical in the conception ; it was suggestive of a soft, gentle, timid, fluttering, cooing, dove-like creature like herself.

So she went home in high spirits, and spent the rest of the morning in making a list of the things she would want in her trousseau.

Just as she and Miss Keppel had finished luncheon, Jack's orderly appeared with a letter from Felix, saying he and his father wanted to see Miss Keppel on private business, of a delicate and painful nature, and would call the next day at three, as they were unable to get there that afternoon.

"What can they be coming about?" said Miss Keppel.

Miss Lydia blushed and simpered.

"A delicate and painful nature," repeated Miss Keppel.

Miss Lydia coughed, but was modestly silent. It did not become her to make any suggestions.

"It is a very delicate subject; painful, too, to poor Sophy to lose me," she thought.

"Have you any idea what they are coming about, Lydia?" said Miss Keppel, tipping up her gold spectacles and looking keenly with her bright eyes at her sister.

"I think I can guess," faltered Miss Lydia.

"Then you are cleverer than I am. I have not an idea, unless it is about Janvrin's bill; is that what you think, Lydia?"

"Janvrin's bill, Sophy! your head runs on that bill. I am going there to-day; if there is anything wrong about it they are sure to tell me, but I hardly think that is what Mr. Oxburgh wants to see you for."

"What do you suppose it is, then?" demanded Miss Keppel.

"I would rather not say, Sophy; I may be wrong," said Miss Lydia, with a self-conscious air her sister was too much preoccupied to observe.

She had no real doubt as to the object of Felix's visit the next day; it must be to propose to her and to gain Miss Keppel's consent, and on the strength of it she spent her afternoon in Janvrin's shop looking at under-linen, a large quantity of which she ordered to be sent home on approval.

The next morning Miss Keppel was astounded to see Janvrin's cart driven up to the house, and box after box, parcel after parcel taken out of it and carried up to Miss Lydia's room.

"Good gracious, Lydia! What is the meaning of all these boxes and parcels? Really one would suppose you were ordering a *trousseau*!" exclaimed Miss Keppel, walking into her sister's room, which was strewn with goods.

"They are only sent on approval, Sophy," said Miss Lydia, colouring painfully as a horrible dread seized her lest she had been somewhat premature in her preparations.

She would not like to show any unseemly haste in the preparations for her marriage. She would not like to do anything unmaidenly.

"Approval indeed! Why, you seem to have had the whole

shop sent up on approval! Either Janvrin is in his dotage or you are, I don't know which. Let me see what he has sent up. Why, good gracious me! here is a regular *trousseau*! petticoats, stays, handkerchiefs, under-clothing! What are you thinking of now, Lydia? I must insist upon knowing what all this means," said Miss Keppel sternly, as she shut the door and sat down facing her sister, with the air of one who would not be deceived.

Miss Lydia trembled; she could not confide in such a severe monitor as this, and how else could she justify her conduct?

"I wish you would wait till you have seen Mr. Oxburgh and his son," she faltered at last.

"Mr. Oxburgh! What can he have to do with all this under-linen?" exclaimed Miss Keppel, failing to see any connection between the squire and ladies' under-clothing.

Miss Lydia did not answer, but suddenly a light flashed upon the elder sister, and rising abruptly from her seat she rushed from the room to indulge in a fit of laughter.

"How I wish Dorcas were here," she muttered as she paused on the landing to wipe the tears from her eyes.

"Poor Lydia! Well, really! I did not think even she could have been so sublimely ridiculous. And a handsome fellow like Felix Oxburgh, too. Why, his mother is only a few years older than Lydia! Oh dear; oh dear! What would Dorcas have said?"

So thinking, Miss Keppel sat down to write to Mrs. Dobson and tell her of Lydia's last folly, a letter which the sequel proved was never sent. Meanwhile she racked her brains in vain to guess what the possible object of Mr. Oxburgh's visit could be.

Punctually at three o'clock the squire and Felix arrived, and Miss Keppel saw at a glance their business was serious, for they both looked very grave and anxious. She alone received them, Lydia modestly remaining in the library till she was sent for, in which room the little lady endured a small martyrdom of suspense.

After the greetings were over the squire plunged at once *in medias res*, only prefacing his story by the remark he had come on a very painful errand of a most delicate nature.

"The fact is, Miss Keppel, I am very much afraid our poor little niece Amy Lockwood is in a terrible scrape; my son and I are over here with Lockwood to see what can be done, and I

trust we may be able to hush the matter up ; but it is a dreadful business, terrible, terrible," said the squire, shaking his handsome head.

"Mr. Oxburgh, you terrify me ! What has happened ? Surely, surely Amy is with you at Oxburgh ?" exclaimed Miss Keppel, who began to fear Amy had run away with some one.

"Oh, yes, she is at Oxburgh. It is nothing of that kind ; it is a money trouble, but as disgraceful as an elopement would have been—almost worse, I am afraid," said the squire, guessing the current Miss Keppel's thoughts had taken.

"Money trouble ! Why, I happen to know Amy paid her bills before leaving the island ; one was such a large one I was surprised at her being able to do so," said Miss Keppel, who in attempting to defend her niece was unconsciously incriminating her.

"Do you happen also to know the amount of the bill you speak of ?" said Mr. Oxburgh, looking at his son, who had scarcely spoken.

"Not exactly, but it was over three hundred pounds, I know, for Madame Janvrin told me so herself, and I have been marvelling ever since where Amy found so large a sum, knowing as I do Mr. Lockwood has only his pay to live upon," said Miss Keppel, who was still far from suspecting the truth.

"Miss Keppel, I grieve to tell you how Amy obtained that money, but the truth is her husband gave her a cheque for forty pounds and she altered it to four hundred," said the squire, drawing his chair closer to his hostess and speaking in a low tone as he leant forward so that she might catch his words.

"Impossible, Mr. Oxburgh ! I cannot believe it ! Why, it is nothing less than robbery in plain English !" exclaimed Miss Keppel.

"It is worse ; it is forgery ; she altered the cheque," said the squire.

At this point in the conversation Felix rose and went to the window, so that his back was turned to the squire and Miss Keppel. Not even Jack felt Amy's disgrace more keenly than he did ; that she was frivolous he had long known ; that she was untruthful he also knew ; that she would sacrifice others to gain her own ends he had also known, but that she could sink so low as this he could not have believed was possible. He would far rather have seen her in her grave ; the thought of death, in spite of all

its horror, was less loathsome to him in connection with his beautiful cousin than the thought of crime. He would rather have seen that beautiful face cold and stiff in death than the soul which animated it stained with crime. No more terrible thing than this could in his opinion have happened to the woman he had once loved and still regarded with tender affection. He shuddered inwardly as his father put Amy's sin into words; he would have taken the guilt on his own shoulders had it been possible rather than hear such terms as robbery and forgery applied to her actions.

"I *cannot* believe it; there must be some mistake," said Miss Keppel, turning very pale.

"Unfortunately, there is no longer any doubt; the only doubt was, what could she have done with so much money? And you have told us that. And my son here cashed the cheque, and was astonished at the amount," said the squire.

"How did Jack come to have so much money in the bank?" interrupted Miss Keppel.

"That is the worst part of it. It was not his money; it belonged to a man with whom we shall have some trouble before we have finished, I expect."

"What do you mean? It is not possible he can mean to prosecute her or Jack either. Why was I not told before? I would have advanced the money willingly to prevent any scandal," exclaimed Miss Keppel.

"No; there is no question of prosecuting—at least I trust not. The money has been refunded, and this gentleman paid already; but he is not inclined to hold his tongue about it, and we have yet to learn what effect it may have upon Jack's career. As soon as he is in possession of the whole truth he is going to lay the matter before his colonel, and ask his advice as to whether he must resign his commission or not."

Here Felix turned round and addressed his father, looking so handsome that Miss Keppel could scarcely repress a smile, even in the midst of her consternation, as she thought of Miss Lydia and her trousseau sent on approval. "Father, let me take the blame. I cashed the cheque. Amy still says it was only forty pounds. Let it be that I altered it to four hundred and pocketed the difference. There is a case against me, and no doubt Jersey can produce a lawyer to undertake it. I will make no defence;

nay, I will plead guilty and take the consequences, to save Jack's reputation and Amy's character. If it were not for your sake I would have done so from the first, but I could not bear to break your heart ; but now that you know the truth, what is there to prevent me ?" said Felix, gaining courage as he went on with his proposal.

"Justice," said the squire briefly, wiping his gold pince-nez and trying to look as if it were this clouded glass which made his sight dim.

"It will not be the first time the innocent has suffered for the guilty," pleaded Felix, as though it were only a trifling thing he was offering. In reality he was offering something more precious than life itself, for the sake of the woman he once loved—even his honour, which many men have died to save.

"No, Felix, no ; it is too great a sacrifice. Don't ask me to consent to such a thing. I could not hold my tongue and hear you, of all people, accused of such a crime," said Mr. Oxburgh, speaking hurriedly and testily ; but, as Felix knew, the testiness was assumed to hide the emotion the squire felt.

"If you kept silence I would not, Mr. Oxburgh. Felix, I thank you with all my heart ; but you must not think of such a thing. Amy is guilty. She must take the consequences of her guilt, though I am willing to do all in my power short of what you suggest to avert those consequences," said Miss Keppel, with more anger in her voice than she had shown throughout the interview.

"It seems incredible even now. I can't conceive how she altered the cheque so cleverly, unless Lockwood by mistake handed her a blank cheque, and, even then, how could she imitate his writing so perfectly ?" said the squire.

"She would have no difficulty in doing that ; she can imitate any writing. To my certain knowledge she has done so twice before ; she falsified my census-paper once for a joke, and I could have sworn it was my own writing if the matter had not been too absurd ; and on another occasion she imitated my sister Dorcas's writing so well as to induce her present husband, who knew her handwriting well, to come all the way from Africa to answer it. So I have no doubt Amy would be quite equal to altering a cheque or imitating her husband's writing," said Miss Keppel.

"Poor, poor Lockwood! Well, all that remains is for us to tell him what you have told us, and then let him lay the matter before the colonel; and we must do the best we can with this fellow Hyde," said Mr. Oxburgh as, after some further conversation, he at length rose to go.

Poor Miss Lydia! There she sat, watching the clock in the library, and hoping every moment to be sent for and the object of this visit, on so painful and delicate a subject, made known to her.

A quarter of an hour, half an hour, three quarters of an hour elapsed, and she was not summoned to the drawing-room. Was it possible Sophy was refusing her consent?

If so, Miss Lydia would marry without it; she would even forego dove-coloured plush and old lace, and elope, as Miss Dorcas had done, naughty as such conduct would be. She was no longer a child, to be controlled by Sophy. If need be, she would assert herself.

Just as she had reached this point in her meditations the drawing-room door opened and Felix and his father came out into the hall.

Were they coming to the library?

How should she ever face them both under such trying circumstances?

How inconsiderate of Sophy to allow Mr. Oxburgh to come as well as his son; she should have kept him in the drawing-room, and allowed Felix to be alone with—with, ahem—the woman of his choice, for a little while. But Sophy was so very proper; women of her age were apt to be prudish, especially if they were unmarried.

The footsteps came nearer—this was unavoidable if Mr. Oxburgh and his son wanted to get out of the house, for the library was close to the hall-door, but it completely upset Miss Lydia's equanimity.

Trembling and blushing, she jumped up from her chair, and skipping lightly to the window, hid herself behind the curtains. She could not face them both—her future father-in-law as well as her *fiancé*, for such she somewhat prematurely considered Felix. No, she really could not; it was such a very awkward position to place her in.

So she placed herself in an equally awkward position, as far as

locality was concerned, with a draught from the window cutting her in two as she hid behind the curtain, one little white delicate hand grasping the heavy damask to let Felix see his charmer was coyly awaiting him.

But, alas! for Miss Lydia. Felix followed his father past the library door, out into the garden, without so much as pausing on the threshold; nay, if the truth must be told, without so much as a thought of the silly little woman hidden behind the curtains.

What could it mean? They appeared to have gone out of the house! Surely her ears had deceived her! It was impossible! Sophy had not rung the bell for the servant to open the door; they could not possibly have left the house.

Before Miss Lydia had sufficiently recovered from her consternation to emerge from her retreat behind the curtains, the library door opened and Miss Keppel walked in.

"Lydia! Where are you? What are you doing behind the curtains?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing," said Miss Lydia feebly.

"Come out, then, and now that Mr. Oxburgh has been and gone, go and send all that *trousseau* you have had sent on approval back to Janvrin; Mr. Oxburgh's business with me was not what you were so silly as to imagine. When you come downstairs I will tell you what he came for," said Miss Keppel, looking so preternaturally grave that Miss Lydia felt her own folly was not enough to account for this gravity.

She went upstairs slowly and sadly, with a dull weight on her heart as she mused on the cruelty of Felix's conduct.

"Oh, men! men! men!" she thought, "you are all alike; all heartless; all cruel; all have one favourite toy, a woman's heart; the tenderer it is the more you delight in battering it."

So musing she reached her bed-room door, but on opening it the scene which met her view quickly changed the current of her thoughts from the channel it was flowing slowly and sadly along, among men, to another channel, where it bubbled and rushed wildly along, among dogs.

The inevitable puppy had found its way into her room, and had been having a delightful romp among her bandboxes, the contents of which were strewn about the room; half-a-dozen fine cambric handkerchiefs were torn to shreds, another half-

dozen were too much damaged to be returned to the shop ; one or two frilled petticoats were also spoilt ; altogether Miss Lydia found the puppy's game and her own folly would cost her between two and three pounds.

However, there is a silver lining to every cloud, and Miss Lydia was not sorry to be obliged to take the handkerchiefs and the petticoats, after having had so many things sent up on approval. Janvrin, at least, could not have the laugh against her ; so she packed up the undamaged articles and sent a note, she took care Miss Keppel never saw, to say she would take the others.

And that once the puppy went unpunished, Miss Lydia contenting herself with unspoken reproaches as she restored her room to order ; her heart would take longer to recover its normal condition ; meanwhile her curiosity as to the delicate nature of Mr. Oxburgh's visits turned her thoughts into another channel, and hurried her descent to the drawing-room and the prose of daily life, after her last brief ramble in the regions of poetry.

(To be continued.)